

Light Breaks Through

The Nativity of Our Lord

December 24 2021



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 50 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 a nursery is provided for
children under 4 years of age.**

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.

Bringing of Light

LIGHT BREAKS THROUGH

Welcome to Worship

P All through the season of Advent as we prepared for Christmas, we've been exploring how we as a church can "make more room in the inn," becoming more hospitable to the needs of our community. On this Christmas Eve, we declare that The Inn is open for the business of compassion with room enough for all! The long-awaited Messiah has been born and on him the light shines. We have only to open the doors of our lives and say "welcome." Our Advent journey has led us to this moment when the light shining through the closed doors of life becomes an open door to new possibilities, new relationships. What a poignant moment for us this year as the light—the hope, peace, joy and love—multiplies from one illuminated heart and hand to another.

Cantors

**Love comes to us at Christmas
Love comes to heal our souls.
Love brings an invitation
that our hearts might be made whole.
As we gather at the stable
in the darkness, glad and grateful
for the sacred in our midst,
for wonder and delight,
Christ is born in us this night.**

Lighting of the Advent Wreath

Tonight we offer the Lights of Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love
to illumine the Door of Welcome.
And we add the brightest light of all... the Light of the Newborn Jesus.
It shines bright like the star that rose over Bethlehem.
May this light also shine in our hearts, in our lives, and in our church.
May this light awaken us to possibilities and lead us to greater
hospitality.

There *IS* room in this Inn, a House for the Holy.

Opening Song



All Love comes to us at Christ-mas. Love comes to heal our souls. Love brings an
in - vi - ta - tion that our hearts might be made whole. As we gath - er
at the sta - ble in the dark-ness, glad and grate-ful for the sa - cred in our midst, for
won - der and de - light, Christ is born in us this night.

Sharing the Peace

Amanda Udis-Kessler

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

P Christ become Light and Love with you.

All And also with you.

The Prophecy

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...

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.

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.

[Please stand as you are able.](#)

O Come, All Ye Faithful

1 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!

3 Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation,
sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!
Glory to God in the highest: *Refrain*

P Let us pray. Holy Child,

**All we come to your manger on this Christmas Eve, wanting to see.
As you came to us on the first Christmas Eve, come to us now.
Enter our hearts and our worship,
that we might recognize the shining light of your love and grace.
In your loving name we pray, Amen.**

[You may be Seated](#)

The Story

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. 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.

He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. 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.

♪ SONG — Oh, Come, Oh, Come Emmanuel ♪

***Oh, come, Oh Come Emmanuel
And ransom captive Israel.
That mourns in lonely exile here,
Until the Son of God appear.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to you, O Israel.***

After Jesus was born, the visitors began to show up to his birthplace, spurred by the message of the angels. But what we know is that in the presence of Jesus there are no visitors, we are all family with a place reserved for each one of us.

And so, let us hear about those who gathered and join them in the presence of Jesus:

♪ 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.***

Nearby shepherds were living in the fields, guarding their sheep at night. The Lord's angel stood before them, the Lord's glory shone around them, and they were terrified. The angel said, "Don't be afraid! Look! I bring good news to you—wonderful, joyous news for all people. Your savior is born today in David's city. He is Christ the Lord. This is a sign for you: you will find a newborn baby wrapped snugly and lying in a manger." Suddenly a great assembly of the heavenly forces was with the angel praising God. They said, "Glory to God in heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors."

♪ SONG — Angels We Have Heard on High ♪

***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.***

When the angels returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, "Let's go right now to Bethlehem and see what's happened. Let's confirm what the Lord has revealed to us." They went quickly and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger.

When they saw this, they reported what they had been told about this child. Everyone who heard it was amazed at what the shepherds told them. Mary committed these things to memory and considered them carefully. The shepherds returned home, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen. Everything happened just as they had been told.

Luke 2: 8-20

♪ Song — 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 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!"***

♪ **Song — Go Tell it on the Mountain** ♪ Please stand as you are able.

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**

Prayers of Intercession

You may be Seated

L Joining our voices with the angels of heaven and all the saints throughout time and space, let us pray for the church, the world, and all in need.

Make of my heart a sta-ble, a house for the Ho-ly, a warm and stur-dy
place for Love to live and grow.

(each prayer petition ends with)

L: God of Love,

All: You hear our prayer.

Offering

While we still will not physically pass the offering plates we will continue to have the plates available at the entrance to receive your offerings and will lift them up in thanksgiving before the throne of grace.

♪ **Song — Love Has Come** ♪

Offertory

**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 Light,

**All we are so glad for the birth of Jesus,
who gives us the gift of new life.
Let our gifts be a blessing to others.
In Jesus' name we pray. Amen**

Call to Confession

Please stand as you are able.

P We are in the presence of God!
As Mary and Joseph welcomed strangers
and a host of heavenly guests to the stable,
so God welcomes us with open arms.

In these silent moments, the counsel of God holds us
as we confess our failings and shortcomings.
God loves us.
God loves you.
God is listening.

Silence for reflection

Affirmation of Forgiveness

P 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.
In the glow of God's grace, ✝ you are forgiven!

Forgiven and forgiving, we carry the light of Christ's love
to an aching and ailing world! Amen.

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.

P It is right, and a good and joyful thing,
always and everywhere to give thanks to you, Birthing God,
creator of heaven and earth.

We gather tonight at the Manger of Grace.

And it is right, and a good and joyful thing,
on this special night and always and everywhere,
to give thanks to you, creator of heaven and earth.

You, who breathed into us the same breath as the infant Jesus,

You, who crafted our every fiber just as you did your own Son,

You, who formed us in your own image—

that same newborn image of the “One Who Walked Among Us,”

Thanks and praise be to You!

Your intention was for every created thing to have a place,

to have vitality, to have sustenance in this world.

Join us to your purpose,

offering hospitality and healing

to the suffering world.

(Tune: Hark, the Herald Angels Sing, words below)

***Holy, holy, holy Lord,
God of power and might adored,
heaven and earth are shining bright
with the glory of your light.
Loud hosannas now we sing!
In the highest may they ring!
Blessed is the coming One, Christ, Emmanuel, your Son.
Glory in the highest! Holy God, your name be blessed!***

Into The Inn of simple means
came a life dedicated and anointed by the Spirit
to preach good news to the poor,
to proclaim release to the captives
and recovering of sight to the blind,
to set at liberty those who are oppressed,
and to announce that the time had come
when you would save your people.

A common birth for common people,
he healed the sick, fed the hungry,
and sat in houses at table with those who suffer,
and those who perpetuated 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.”

P 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 many for the forgiveness of sins.
Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.”

And so, in remembrance of your mighty acts in Jesus Christ,
we offer ourselves as a holy and living sacrifice.

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.

By your Spirit make us one with You, and with one another
through your Son Jesus Christ, both the Giver and the Gift.

All Amen

The Lord’s Prayer

Please stand as you are able.

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.**

All 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.

Communion Songs

[You may be Seated](#)

♪ 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 baby awakes,
but little Lord Jesus, no crying he makes.
I love thee 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 take us to 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 — Infant Holy, Infant Lowly ♪

1 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!

**2 Flocks were sleeping, shepherds keeping vigil till the morning new
saw the glory, heard the story, tidings of a gospel true.**

Thus rejoicing, free from sorrow, praises voicing, greet the morrow:

Christ the child was born for you!

Christ the child was born for you!

♪ Song — Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming ♪

1 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.

**2 Isaiah had foretold it, the rose I have in mind;
with Mary we behold it, the virgin mother kind.
To show God's love aright, she bore to us a Savior,
when half-spent was the night.**

**4 O Savior, child of Mary, who felt our human woe;
O Savior, king of glory, who dost our weakness know:
bring us at length, we pray, to the bright courts of heaven
and into endless day.**

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 surpasses 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.*

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.

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,

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.

🎵 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! Shepherd 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.**

Benediction

[Please stand in body or spirit.](#)

P

As you go out into the world this night...

May God's Door of Welcome
swing open in your heart and in your life.

May Christ's humble first dwelling
remind you of the plenty you already know.

And may the Spirit lead you into
more possibility and hospitality than you can imagine,
making room in The Inn for all.

May it be so for you. ✝ May it be so for us.
May it be so for this church.
May it be so for the world.

All Amen

[Extinguish candles](#)

Sending Song

♪ 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!**

Dismissal

P Go in peace. Share the gift of Jesus.

All Thanks be to God.

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**Thank you to all who donated the Poinsettias
as
for our Christmas Services:**

Linda Corey *in loving memory of Linda's parents*
Alan and Cindy Day *in memory of our son Erik*
Alan and Cindy Day *in memory of my sister*

Debbie Johnson Officer

Orv and Ann Engelby *in memory of their parents*
Sharen Kamp *in honor of her children*

Connie Larsen *in memory of*

Mr. and Mrs. Orville Hanson,

Mr. and Mrs. Richard Larsen

and Jerry Larsen

Pat and Eric Refsdal *in honor of Pat's parents and*
In memory of Eric's parents

Pat and Eric Refsdal *in honor of*
our musicians and singers

Diane Schultz *in honor of her friends*

Marlys and Keith Sorbo *in honor of their children*

Marlys and Keith Sorbo *in honor of*
their grandchildren

Arliss and Roy Zimmerman *in loving memory*
of their parents

