

The Nativity of Our Lord



Being Present with Light

December 24, 2023



Ascension Lutheran Church
1105 N. Washington Blvd.
Ogden, UT 84404
801.782.2810

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 worshipping community, these differences become celebrations of diversity.

Children are always welcome in worship services;
however please know a nursery space is available for
parents who need to tend to their little ones.

Introduction

The season of preparation for celebrating the birth of Jesus can be filled with worry about finding the perfect Christmas gifts.

*Deep down we want people in our lives to know they are special and that we love them. **But sometimes we overlook the greatest gift of all... our very presence.***

Our spiritual ancestors were also worried — often about survival in the midst of political occupation. And the response of the scriptures is "the Holy Living One is with you." Like a shepherd who never leaves the flock, we are held close.

*This season, we are invited to **be the gift of presence** for our loved ones, for our communities, for those who need it most.*

Bringing of Light

Children and Youth in Attendance

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.

Being Present with Light

Welcome to Worship

P ...“Emmanuel” — means: “God with us.” And this is the best gift of all.

Cantors *What can I give Him, poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;
If I were a Wise One, I would do my part;
Yet what can I give Him: I will give my heart.*

Lighting of the Advent Wreath

WA We have unwrapped a present on each Sunday of Advent with great anticipation for the gifts that God reveals.

All **We open our hearts as we open the gift!**

WA The gift of hope is an essential survival tool because it reminds us that the hard times do not have the last word.

The gift of Christ’s peace reminds us that we can have peace even in the midst of non-peaceful situations.

The gift of joy is not the equivalent of happiness, but rather the deep call to delight in the small things.

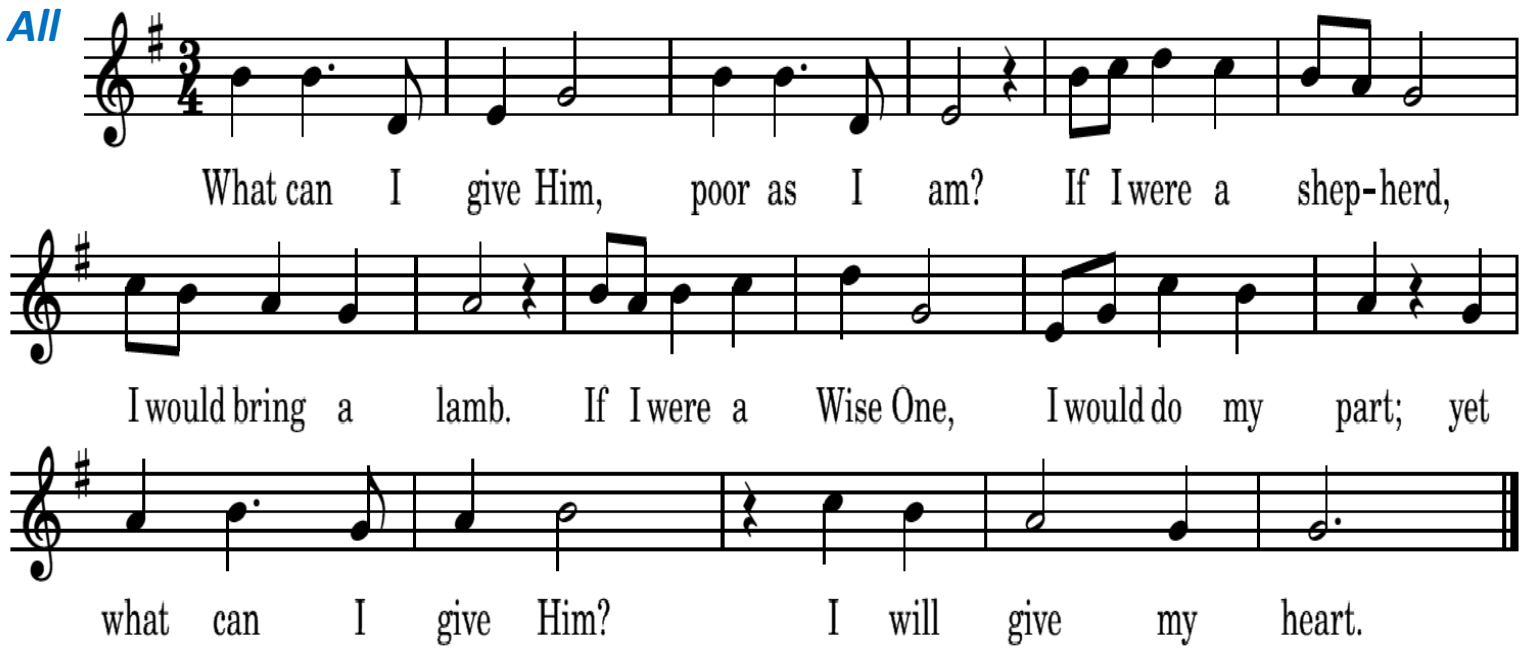
The gift of love is the clarion call to us as Jesus’ disciples.

The more love we put into the world, the better the world will be.

P And tonight we celebrate the presence of the Light among us.

I invite you to stand as you are comfortable and face the light as it comes into our midst from the back.

All



What can I give Him, poor as I am? If I were a shep-herd,
 I would bring a lamb. If I were a Wise One, I would do my part; yet
 what can I give Him? I will give my heart.

P Let us pray:

All Holy Living God, you are our Light.
 Let this light grow in our lives each day,
 so we can be a Present of Light to others.
 Unwrap and open our hearts.
 May it be so. Amen.

Message

Pr. Debra Jimenez

The Word Present Among Us: PROCLAIMING

♪ 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**

We begin to understand why we are called to be fully present with one another with the words of the prophet Isaiah. Isaiah wrote in a time of occupation and exile of his people and the people are 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 are seeing 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.**

Isaiah 9: 2-8, excerpts

♪ Song — It Came upon the Midnight Clear ♪

**1 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.

♪ Song — *Infant Holy, Infant Lowly* ♪

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!

♪ Song — The First Noel ♪

*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, 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.

♪ 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.*

*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** 🎵

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!

So they ran into town, and eventually they found Mary and Joseph and the baby lying in the feeding trough. 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.

🎵 **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!"***

Prayers of the People

WA 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.

Em - man - u - el, Em - man - u - el,
 His name is called Em - man - u - el:
 God with us, re - vealed in us!
 His name is called Em - man - u - el.

(each prayer petition ends with)

L: Hear us, O God.

All: Your mercy is great.

Sharing the Peace of Christ

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

P Christ become Peace with you.

All And also with you.

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 ♪

**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, we offer the gifts of our hearts and our lives to the service of all your people.

All Prepare the way before us as we meet you in this simple meal, through Christ Jesus, our pathway and our light.

Confession and Assurance

P In these silent moments, the counsel of God holds us as we confess our failings and shortcomings.

God of light,

All We confess, that we cut ourselves off from being present with you. We distance ourselves from the love that is ours as your heirs in the family of God.

It seems too wonderful a gift!

Yet, the Shepherd comes to find us, leading us gently back into safety, back into care, back into relationship.

P People of God, know this... there are gifts with your name on them - gifts called Grace,
called Forgiveness,
called "Assurance."

They are yours whenever you accept and open them.

They are already and always there for you.

You do not have to be good enough to get them.

They are yours already because that is the nature of our loving God, God-with-us, Emmanuel.

In the name of Jesus Christ, we are forgiven.

All Glory to God, Amen

The Great Thanksgiving and Words of Institution

To the tune of What Child is This?

P *♪ ♪ The Lord be with you. ♪ ♪*

All *And with you too.
We lift our hearts to God.*

P *Let us give thanks.*

All *Its right to do
We open our hearts to let gifts flow through.*

P 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.

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.

All *♪ ♪ This, this is Christ the One ♪ ♪
 who mirrors light for all of us.
 Haste, haste to bring him laud,
 the Word of time eternal.*

The Lord's Prayer

P Let us approach the throne of grace as we pray as Jesus taught us:

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 In this meal, righteousness and love meet together.
Come, take your place at the table.

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

shed for you and
for all people
for the forgiveness of sin



All are Welcome!

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.*

O Little Town of Bethlehem

- 1 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.*
- 2 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!*
- 3 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.*

**4 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!**

♪ 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!**

Post Communion Blessing and Prayer

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

All Amen

P Eternal God,
We give you thanks for this holy mystery in which you have made the
Gift of your Presence known to us.

**All Grant that we may go into the world in the strength of your Spirit, to
give ourselves as a gift of love to others.
In the name of Jesus Christ, 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.

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.

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.***

Benediction

P Now, go and be truly present
so you may be a gift of presence for others.
That's all that is expected —
that the gift that is YOU
is the best gift you can give.

In the name of the Holy Presence,
the Divine Gift,
and the ✝ Spirit of Love
that is just waiting for us to unwrap abundant life.

All Amen

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 love. Share the gift of Jesus.

All Thanks be to God.

**“The good news of Jesus Christ is that God is with us,
no matter what, no matter where, no matter when.
There is no place you can go where God is not,
no time of the day when God is off the clock.
This is the teaching of the Incarnation, God with us,
Emmanuel.”**

“[adapted from Amy Oden, Right Here, Right Now]

About our Worship Space

*Just as the seers of old looked to the skies for the light of life and love,
our worship space attempts to capture the beauty of the night sky,
the lights of the heavens framing the gift of sacrifice
that was always present...
before the birth of Jesus...
even before creation itself.*

*The cross was no surprise to God, yet he came to us anyway...
as a vulnerable baby...as one of us.*

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**Thank you to all who Donated the Poinsettias
for our Christmas Worship Service:**

- Mylitta Barrett *in loving memory of her mom, Edwina Boozer*
Carol and Lynn Benson *in loving memory of Carol's two brothers and 1 sister*
Carol and Lynn Benson *in loving memory of Lynn and Carol's parents*
Babs and Bob Bezyack *in loving memory of Ruth and Rollin Boe and Betty Lance*
Dee and Don Brown *Merry Christmas to one and all*
Linda and Clark Corey *in loving memory of Linda's parents*
Linda and Clark Corey *in loving memory of Clark's parents*
Edith Cryts *in loving memory of her brother John and parents, Rosalea and Charles*
Cindy and Alan Day *in loving memory of their son, Erik*
Cindy and Alan Day *in loving memory of sister, Debbie Officer*
Christie & Mark Denniston *in loving memory of Kent & Ruth Anderson, Anders'
grandparents*
Christie & Mark Denniston *in loving memory of Gary Denniston, your 1st heavenly Christmas*
Anne and Orv Engelby *in loving memory of their parents and siblings*
Diane Engelby *in loving memory of Neil Kochenour*
Renee and Todd Hart *in loving memory of Lorraine Wilson and John Conroy*
Shelie and Ada Ingram *in loving memory of their moms*
Debra and James Jimenez *in loving memory of their parents and siblings*
Sharen Kamp *in loving memory of her husband, Ivan*
Nancy & Mike Otto *in thanksgiving for all who pray and lift up the needs of others before
the throne of grace and mercy*
Pat and Eric Refsdal *in honor of our musicians and singers*
Pat and Eric Refsdal *in loving memory of Pat's mom, Joan*
Marlys and Keith Sorbo *in loving memory of Paula Volpi*
Marlys and Keith Sorbo *in honor of Cecil, Penny and Kate*
Carol Stafford *in loving memory of Jean Goodwin*
Diana and John Warkentin *in loving memory of their son, Scott*
Arliss and Roy Zimmerman *in loving memory of Lonnie Kern*
Arliss and Roy Zimmerman *in loving memory of Arliss' brother, Charles*