

On the Way to Bethlehem



Going Home, Changed by the Word

*January 5, 2025
Epiphany of Our Lord*



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 worshipping 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.**

Introduction

We are so often focused on the destination in our travels. "Where are you going?" is the most common question upon hearing that someone is heading out of town. While the destination is perhaps the impetus for deciding to "go," it is often the journey itself that offers the most memorable moments—frustrating or delightful. This Advent and Christmas season, we have paid attention not just to the destination of Christmas, but also to the places where events occurred that led to a starry night on which a child was born who would change the world. And we have pondered our own milestones—the progress and the potholes "on the way."

Persia: A Place of Return

P As we begin a new year, we often take stock of our lives and spend time in contemplation and discernment.

This continuing story of the birth of Christ also involves inquiry.

Three wise “seekers” came to visit the newborn Christ, guided by a new star they had noticed.

On this last day of our series, we ask ourselves, what are we seeking? Where is our attention focused? What new stars may be calling to us? Will we just go back into routines of life or will we take this moment to understand more deeply how we can “return anew?”

*♪ ♪ 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.*

The image shows a musical score for the hymn "O Little Town of Bethlehem" in 4/4 time, written in a single treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The score is divided into three systems, each with a measure number (1, 4, and 7) at the beginning. The lyrics are written below the notes.

1 We're on our way. We're on our way.

4 Dream of the day when love holds sway. With all the earth, in

7 all our hearts. We're on our way. This is the day.

P Holy and Living God, we pray for all who seek.

All Too often, we are seeking things that do not satisfy.

Give us wisdom to pursue what really matters as this new year begins.

Call us to a “turning”– following your Star of Wonder.

Call us to “re-turn” toward your purposes for us.

Remind us that our longing and our waiting are wrapped in your care.

Draw us to a more simple and humble existence in which our treasures are defined by the hope, peace, joy, and love we feel and also give away.

We pray this in the name of your Son,

Jesus, the Christ, the Savior of Our Lives. Amen.

P Let this be a marker of assurance that we are moving in a faithful direction:

God is with us every step of our way toward His Kin-dom.

Jesus is being born into our lives even now. ✝

The Spirit is transforming us in this place.

All Amen.

[You may be Seated](#)

A Reading from Ephesians, the 3rd chapter

In Jesus, all of God's plans and purposes have been made known as heaven and earth are united in Christ. Through Jesus, we have been chosen as God's children and have been promised eternal salvation.

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ⁴ just as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love. ⁵ He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus

Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. ⁷ In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace ⁸ that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and insight ⁹ he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, ¹⁰ as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. ¹¹ In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance, having been destined according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to his counsel and will, ¹² so that we, who were the first to set our hope on Christ, might live for the praise of his glory. ¹³ In him you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in him, were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit; ¹⁴ this is the pledge of our inheritance toward redemption as God's own people, to the praise of his glory.

Ephesians 1:3-14

WA The word of the Lord.

All Thanks be to God.

Gospel Acclamation

Please stand in body or spirit.

♪ ♪ *Emmanuel, Emmanuel, His name is called Emmanuel* ♪ ♪
God with us revealed in us. His name is called Emmanuel

Gospel Reading

P The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the 2nd chapter.

All Glory to you, O Lord.

God's promise shines bright in the night as magi follow a star to honor a new king. Strangers from a faraway land, they welcome the long-awaited messiah of Israel.

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, magi from the east came to Jerusalem asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star in the east and have come to

pay him homage.” When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him, and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it has been written by the prophet: ‘And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah, for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel.’”

Then Herod secretly called for the magi and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, “Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage.” When they had heard the king, they set out, and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen in the east, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

Matthew 2: 1-12

P The Gospel of our Lord.

All Praise to you, O Christ.

You may be Seated

Children's Sermon & Noisy Offering

Lit - tle don - key, lit - tle don - key, on the dust - y road,
got to keep on plod - ding on - wards, with your pre - cious load.
Ring out those bells to - night, Beth - le - hem, Beth - le - hem.

Fol - low that star to - night, Beth - le - hem, Beth - le - hem.
 Don't give up now, lit - tle don - key, Beth - le - hem's in sight.

Sermon Pr. Debra Jimenez

Hymn of the Day

Please stand in body or spirit.

Love Came Down at Christmas

Words and Music by Roger Copeland

1. 3. Love__ came down at Christ-mas, Love, __ all love di - vine;
 2. Love__ was in a man - ger, In__ a cat - tle stall,

last time to Coda ⊕ 1

Love__ came down at Christ - mas, And I know, I know that love is mine.
 And__ while an - gels hov - ered, Love was born to be the King of

2

all. The shep - herds heard the choirs of an - gels, The

wise men saw a dis - tant light. They found the won - der they were



search - ing for, And wor - shipped Him that ho - ly night. _____ (to Vs. 3)

 *Coda*



mine. _____ And I know, I know that love is mine. _____

Apostles' Creed

P Let us join together with the saints across the ages confessing our faith with the words of the Apostles' Creed.

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's 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 to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

Prayers of The People

Filled with good news of great joy,
let us offer our prayers for the church, the earth, and all people.

We Lift Up, By Nick Ehrhardt

All Ooooh, Ooooooh, We Lift Up Our Prayers.

(Repeat throughout)

Leader For the planet, for its people.
For the church and it's many shapes of steeples.
For the hungry, for the cold.
For the young and for the old.
For our joy and for our pain.
For the sunshine for the rain.
For the dying, for the sick.
For our loved ones and the glue that makes us stick.
For our leaders for their minds.
For your wisdom as to how we draw our lines.
For the world and its frantic pace.
For the places where we find deeper space.
For all yearning hearts beneath the sun.
For the chance for a prayer for everyone.
(For our words and for our silence. (Pause)
Ooooh, Ooooooh, Ahhhmen.

Passing of the Peace

P Jesus Christ become Peace with you.

All And also with you.

Offertory

Tune: Away in a Manger

♪ ♪ Praise God for these gifts that we offer today ♪ ♪
and bless them for good in the world, this we pray.
Praise Jesus, the Christ-Child, our Hope and our Stay,
the Spirit, our Keeper, our Guide on the Way.

Offertory Prayer

P Let us pray,
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 peace. Amen.**

The Great Thanksgiving and Words of Institution

P The Lord be with you

***All* And also with you.**

P Lift up your hearts.

***All* We lift them to the Lord.**

P Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

***All* It is right to give God thanks and praise.**

P On 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 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
which is shed for you and for all people
for the forgiveness of sin.
Do this for the remembrance of me.”

The Lord's Prayer

Please stand in body or spirit.

P God in Community, Holy and One,
we lift our prayers to you, saying ...

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

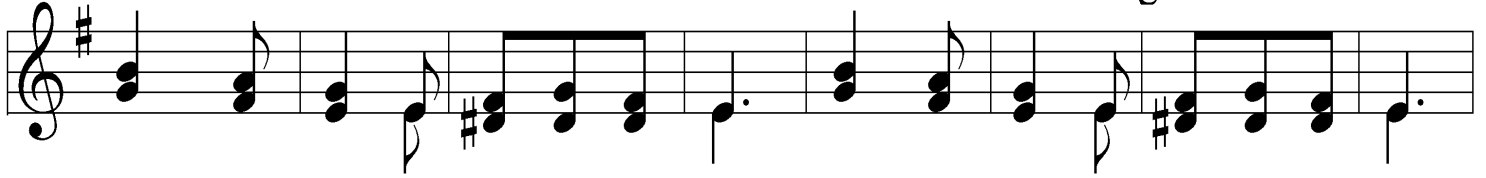
P Christ has set the table with more than enough for all. Come!

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

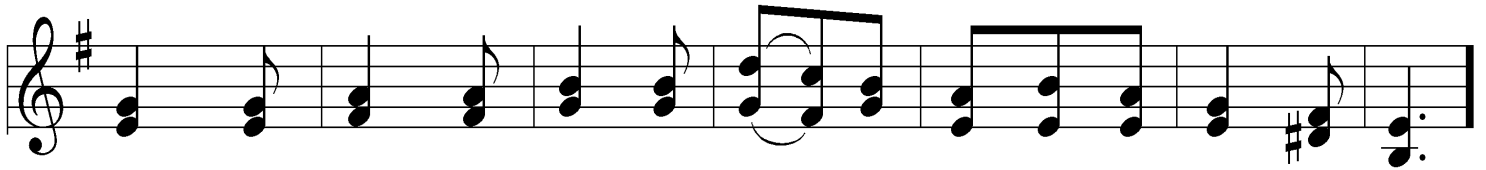
Gluten Free wafers available –ask the communion attendant



We Three Kings of Orient Are



1 We three kings of O - ri - ent are; bear - ing gifts we tra - verse a - far,
 2 Born a king on Beth - le - hem's plain, gold I bring to crown him a - gain;
 3 Frank - in - cense to of - fer have I; in - cense owns a de - i - ty nigh;
 4 Myrrh is mine; its bit - ter per - fume breathes a life of gath - er - ing gloom;
 5 Glo - rious now be - hold him a - rise, King and God and Sac - ri - fice;



field and foun - tain, moor and moun - tain, fol - low - ing yon - der star.
 king for - ev - er, ceas - ing nev - er, o - ver us all to reign.
 prayer and prais - ing, glad - ly rais - ing, wor - ship - ing God Most High.
 sor - rowing, sigh - ing, bleed - ing, dy - ing, sealed in the stone - cold tomb.
 heav'n sings al - le - lu - ia: al - le - lu - ia the earth re - plies.

Refrain



Oh, star of won - der, star of night, star with roy - al beau - ty bright;



west - ward lead - ing, still pro - ceed - ing, guide us to thy per - fect light!

Come And Behold Him

Words and Music by
 John Chisum and George T. Searcy



1 Come and be - hold Him, come, see His glo - ry,
 2 Come and be - hold Him, come, see His mer - cy,

come with an hon - est heart to see all He is;
 come find His ten - der - ness_ reach - ing to you;

We will dis - cov - er all of His beau - ty, His light will
 Just as a mir - ror shows a re - flec - tion, His Word and

burn a - way all the dark - ness we've known. _____
 Spir - it come, now re - flect - ing His love. _____ Come and be -

hold _____ Him, come and be - hold _____ Him, come with an

hon - est heart to see all He is; Come and be -

hold _____ Him, wait now be - fore _____ Him, come with an

hon - est heart to see all He is. _____

God Is So Good

1 God is so good, God is so good.

God is so good, he's so good to me.

2. He cares for me...

3. He loves me so...

4. I'll praise his name...

Post Communion Blessing and Prayer

Please stand in body or spirit.

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

All Amen

P Holy God,

All we have received from your table more than we could ever ask.
As you have nourished us in this meal,
now strengthen us to love the world with your own life.
In your name we pray. Amen

You may be Seated

Stewardship of Life & Ministry Announcements

Benediction

Please stand in body or spirit.

P Incarnate God,
As we begin this new year we wait with you
for the hungry to be fed,
for freedom for all,
for the weapons of war to be abolished,
for everyone to have clean water and sanitation,
for an end to suspicion between Christian, Muslim, and Jew,
for peace in our world ..
Incarnate God, we wait ...✝
for your Kingdom to come.

All Amen.

Sending Song

♪ Song — Go Tell it on the Mountain ♪
Verses by soloist
Congregation joins in the refrain

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**

**The shepherds feared and trembled when, lo, above the earth
rang out the angel chorus that hailed our Savior's birth. Refrain**

**Down in a lonely manger the humble Christ was born;
and God sent us salvation that blessed Christmas morn. Refrain**

Dismissal

WA Go in Peace. The Word of God dwells in You!

All Thanks be to God!

Reading for next Sunday,
January 12th
Baptism of Our Lord

1st Reading

Isaiah 43:1-7

Psalm

Psalm 29

2nd Reading

Acts 8:14-17

Gospel:

Luke 3:15-17, 21-22

*Each week our congregation is **led by children** to collect pennies, nickels, dimes, and quarters. 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 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.*

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

Front Cover:

Photos by Worship Design Studio

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