



Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church
www.trinitylutheran.ca

CHURCH AT HOME

Announcements:

Welcome to Trinity's worship resource for December 24, 2021, celebrating Christmas Eve. Pastor Mike is currently on a medical leave of absence. If you have a pastoral emergency, please contact Pastor Jack Dressler - **519-250-7210**.

NOTE – There will be NO in-person service on Sunday December 26 AND Sunday January 2, 2022 (we will be sending out our “Church at Home” on those days).

Thank you again for your support for Trinity. Please continue to mail in cheques, or drop them off in the church's mailbox or make your donation either through PAR or through the Donate button on the church's website, at “www.trinitylutheran.ca”.

Entrance Hymn: Hark! The Herald Angels Sing (verse 1 only)

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 host proclaim, “Christ is born in Bethlehem!”
Hark! The herald angels sing, “Glory to the newborn King!”

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.

Worship

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all! **And also with you!**

Prayer of the Day

Almighty God, you made this holy night shine with the brightness of the true Light. Grant that here on earth we may walk in the light of Jesus' presence and in the last day wake to the brightness of his glory; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

Hymn: Oh, Little Town of Bethlehem (verse 1 only)

Oh 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.

First Reading: Isaiah 9:2-7

This poem promises deliverance from Assyrian oppression, a hope based on the birth of a royal child with a name full of promise. While Judah's king will practice justice and righteousness, the real basis for faith lies in God's passion for the people: The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this!

²The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
those who lived in a land of deep darkness—
on them light has shined.

³You have multiplied the nation,
you have increased its joy;
they rejoice before you
as with joy at the harvest,
as people exult when dividing plunder.

⁴For the yoke of their burden,
and the bar across their shoulders,
the rod of their oppressor,
you have broken as on the day of Midian.

⁵For all the boots of the tramping warriors
and all the garments rolled in blood

shall be burned as fuel for the fire.
⁶For 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.
⁷His 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.

Psalm: Psalm 96

¹Sing to the LORD a new song;
sing to the LORD, all the earth.
²**Sing to the LORD, bless the name of the LORD;
proclaim God's salvation from day to day.**
³Declare God's glory among the nations
and God's wonders among all peoples.
⁴**For great is the LORD and greatly to be praised,
more to be feared than all gods.**
⁵As for all the gods of the nations, they are but idols;
but you, O LORD, have made the heavens.
⁶**Majesty and magnificence are in your presence;
power and splendor are in your sanctuary.**
⁷Ascribe to the LORD, you families of the peoples,
ascribe to the LORD honor and power.
⁸**Ascribe to the LORD the honor due the holy name;
bring offerings and enter the courts of the LORD.**
⁹Worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness;
tremble before the LORD, all the earth.
¹⁰**Tell it out among the nations: "The LORD is king!"**

The one who made the world so firm that it cannot be moved will judge the peoples with equity.”

¹¹Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad;
let the sea thunder and all that is in it; let the field be joyful and all that is therein.

¹²**Then shall all the trees of the wood shout for joy at your coming, O LORD,
for you come to judge the earth.**

¹³You will judge the world with righteousness
and the peoples with your truth.

Hymn: It Came Upon The Midnight Clear (verse 1 only)

It came upon a 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 heaven's all gracious King.”
The world in solemn stillness lay To hear the angels sing.

Second Reading: Titus 2:11-14

The appearance of God's grace in Jesus Christ brings salvation for all humanity. Consequently, in the present we live wisely and justly while also anticipating the hope of our Savior's final appearance.

¹¹The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all, ¹²training us to renounce impiety and worldly passions, and in the present age to live lives that are self-controlled, upright, and godly, ¹³while we wait for the blessed hope and the manifestation of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. ¹⁴He it is who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds.

Gospel Reading: Luke 2:1-14 [15-20]

God's greatest gift comes as a baby in a manger. Angels announce the “good news of great joy” and proclaim God's blessing of peace.

¹In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. ²This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³All went to their own towns to be registered. ⁴Joseph 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. ⁵He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. ⁶While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. ⁷And 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.

⁸In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: ¹¹to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹²This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.” ¹³And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,

¹⁴“Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace among those whom he favors!”

¹⁵When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.” ¹⁶So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. ¹⁷When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; ¹⁸and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. ¹⁹But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. ²⁰The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

The gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

The Sermon: Christmas Eve (Pastor Jack Dressler)

I remember having a conversation in my first congregation with one of my members, Fred and his son, Josh, about what they were going to do on Christmas. The father explained that they would get up and open their presents on Christmas morning and then go to church. The son replied, “Church? On Christmas? We’re going to go to church on Christmas?” Fred patiently explained, “Of course, that’s what Christmas is all about. It’s about Jesus’ birth and God coming to us.” Josh said, I know, I know, I know! But Christmas! Church wrecks everything!”

The church wrecks everything. Yes, yes it does and tonight we come here to encounter not only the church that wrecks everything, but also the child who was born to wreck everything.

It may sound a bit odd in the face of our culture’s approach to Christmas and even disquieting in an age where the co-vid pandemic runs rampant in our community and in

our world. But we dare not forget the scandal of both the cradle and the cross and be lulled by our culture's attempts to sentimentalize Christmas. We all do it and to be honest, it even happens in the church.

Think for a moment about how our own hymnody conspires to tame this feast day into something more palatable and . . . dare we even say . . . *nice*. Consider the opening of the beloved carol *O Little Town of Bethlehem* that we just sang. "O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie." Lovely words from Phillips Brooks, but if we think about the tumultuous history of the Middle East, imagining Bethlehem as peaceful, more expresses a longing than an historical reality. And what about *Away in a Manger* telling us, "The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes, but little Lord Jesus no crying he makes? No crying? Any nurse or doctor would call that a zero on the Apgar score and would start immediate resuscitation attempts. Seriously, these images may just be conspiring to sentimentalize the scandal of Christmas.

What about those emotional expectations of the holidays? You know, those happy family get-togethers that often don't turn out so great or the longing for an estranged relationship to magically get better and be resolved in some kind of Christmas miracle. Of course, there's the cultural pressure to over consume. Whether it's going overboard with buying presents and dreading the credit card bill in January or over-eating and drinking and dreading what the scale will tell you in January. Between sentimentality, emotional burdens, and unrealistic cultural expectations, perhaps we need this child of God to wreck what we've made of Christmas.

The reality is we come together this night to pay honour to the one who came to wreck all of that, the one who came to wreck everything! This child's birth was the plan of a subversive God who snuck into the back door of history on a mission to wreck everything. Coming as one of us – vulnerable, poor, and powerless – he came to upend the world as we have constructed it.

He came to wreck our selfishness and narcissism, so that we might be able to love God and others and to receive that love in return. He came to wreck our fear of death, so that we might be able to live more fully and more freely in this life. He came to wreck the political systems which choose who is in and who is out, so that all of God's children would be included in the kingdom. He came to break down our economy of values to build a different one based on valuing the eternal rather than the things we want that pass away. He came to break down our ideas of family to embrace a wider vision of God's family, which includes all people, not just the ones like us or the ones we like. Yes, he came to wreck every structure we try to build which puts us first at the ex-

pense of everyone else. As he would later tell his followers, he come not to be served, but to serve. And he calls us to follow in his path.

This is no small thing. For two thousand plus years, people have come together to mark the birth of Christ as God's subversive way of dwelling among us and wrecking everything for the sake of bringing about something greater, than we could ask for or imagine. To mark a vision of the kingdom of God unfolding right here in our midst regardless of our fears or of the conflict we may be experiencing. May this holy child, this holy one man wrecking crew, disrupt your life this season so that he might plant the grace of God in your heart and you may truly come to know Christ's love.

Let us pray: *God, we are as confounded as Joseph and Mary, as busy as the innkeepers, as lonely as the shepherds, as frightened as Herod, as wayfaring as the Magi. Turn us again to the place where, with quietness, you wrap up your truth and promise, your love and salvation in the Child born in a rude barn. We ponder these things as the noise and clamour of the world is stilled for a time and there is a peace that settles deep within us. Bring us to Bethlehem, to the place where Jesus was homeless but where we are truly at home. Amen.*

Peace

The peace of the Lord be with you always.

Hymn of the Day: Oh, Come, All Ye Faithful (verse 1 only)

Oh, come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant!

Oh come ye, oh come ye to Bethlehem;

Come and behold Him, born the King of Angels:

Oh, come, let us adore Him, Oh, come, let us adore Him,

Oh, come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord!

The Prayers of Intercession

Joining our voices with the heavenly host and Christians throughout time and space, let us pray for the church, the world, and all in need.

Love proclaims that a Savior has been born to us! Inspire your church throughout the world to proclaim the good news of Jesus' birth to all who seek salvation, hope, and new life. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Love whispers to a weary world that the time for rest and restoration has come. Maintain healthy cycles of wake and sleep for all creatures. Where light pollution

disrupts natural rhythms, encourage new practices. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**
Love cries to a warring world that the time for peace is at hand. Direct those in power who make decisions on behalf of others, that they nurture and sustain all that is healthy, good, and holy. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Love sings through the wails of a newborn baby. Respond to all who cry out in pain, despair, or need this night. Bring comfort to those for whom separation, grief, or loss makes the Christmas season especially difficult. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Love murmurs words of comfort to a newborn child and exhausted parents. Bless new and expectant parents or caregivers, especially those who are alone or afraid this night. Pour out your love upon families of every kind. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

God of presence, bless those of this community who cannot be with us this morning, and those who walk with them, especially:

In Residence: Margaret; Maria; Stan; Katie; Katherine; Cordelle;

Needing our prayers: Peter; Brenda; Doug; Dorothy; Bill; Bev; Ed; Marilyn; Jordan; Audrey; John; John; Greg; Sam; Katie; Walter; Hart; Frank; Pastor Mike & Patti

Recovering: Katherine; Carol; Betty; Greg; Kati; Bill; Sharon; Mary;

And all those we name in our hearts...

Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

God's ever-present love is proclaimed through the faithful who came before us. We give you thanks for Mary, John the baptizer, Elizabeth his mother, Joseph the dreamer, and all who point toward your love. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Rejoicing in your Word made flesh among us, we commend these prayers to you, confident of your grace and love made known to us in Jesus Christ, our Savior. **Amen.**

Hymn: Angels We Have Heard on High (verse 3 only)

Come to Bethlehem and see, Him whose birth the angels sing,
Come, adore on bended knee, Christ the Lord, the newborn King.

Gloria, in excelsis Deo

Gloria, in excelsis Deo

Lord's Prayer

Lord, remember us in your kingdom, and teach us to pray:

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.

Benediction

The God of hope fill us with all joy and peace in believing, so that we may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit, through Christ Jesus, the Word made flesh. **Amen.**

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 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 dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus Lord, at Thy birth
Jesus Lord, at Thy birth

Silent Night (German)

Stille Nacht, heilige Nacht
Alles schläft; einsam wacht
Nur das traute hochheilige Paar.
Holder Knabe im lockigen Haar,
Schlaf in himmlischer Ruh!
Schlaf in himmlischer Ruh!

Stille Nacht, heilige Nacht,
Hirten erst kundgemacht
Durch der Engel Halleluja,
Tönt es laut von fern und nah:
Christ, der Retter ist da!
Christ, der Retter ist da!

Stille Nacht, heilige Nacht,
Gottes Sohn, o wie lacht
Lieb' aus deinem göttlichen Mund,
Da uns schlägt die rettende Stund'.
Christ, in deiner Geburt!
Christ, in deiner Geburt!

Dismissal

Go in peace. Rejoice in Christ our Savior. **Thanks be to God!**