



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 Jack Dressler (519-250-7210) is our interim Pastor. Please contact him for any pastoral needs.

NOTE – There will be NO in-person service on Sunday December 25 AND Sunday January 1, 2023.

Upcoming Services:

Date	Comment	Pastor / Lay Leader	Reader
December 25	NO SERVICE	NO SERVICE	NO SERVICE
January 1, 2023	NO SERVICE	NO SERVICE	NO SERVICE
January 8	Communion	Pastor Jack	
January 15		Father Brian	
January 22		Greg	
January 29		Father Brian	
February 5		Greg	
February 12	Communion	Pastor Jack	
February 19			
February 26	Communion	Father Brian	
March 5		Greg	
March 12			
March 19			
March 22	Ash Wednesday – 10am	Pastor Jack	
March 26	Communion	Pastor Jack	

We need your help to assist in the above services – readers and lay leaders.

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: Christ Born In Us (preached by Pastor Jack Dressler at Trinity on December 24, 2022)

Mary’s time had come. After the long journey, the road to Bethlehem, and the days of worry before that – what would Joseph say when he found out she was pregnant? How did this happen anyway? But Joseph had stood by her, and now the time had finally come, in a strange city, with no family there to help, and the barn would have to do. There was no room in the inn, but how could they have afforded that anyway? Money was hard to come by. The baby at last was coming, and Mary was terrified.

And the shepherds too were terrified. Like Mary and Joseph, they weren’t sleeping inside that night: they were out in the fields, and it was cold. And suddenly this Angel of the Lord was confronting them, and this glory of the Lord was nearly blinding them, and this multitude from heaven was declaring peace on earth. There hadn’t been peace for a long time; how was this baby lying in a manger going to bring peace now? It didn’t make sense.

We have heard this story before, and we are probably not terrified tonight, as Mary and the shepherds were. But maybe we should be. Because if Christmas really comes,

the way we say we want it to, things will have to change. The world will be reborn. The kingdom of God will come on earth, as in heaven.

Still, like Mary, we have been waiting, and praying, and hoping for this night. When the Angel Gabriel told her she would bear God's Son into the world. Mary's response was, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word."

Mary agreed to do this despite the strange and unusual circumstances. She knew people would think the wrong thing and look down on her. She knew that Joseph might not understand. Even knowing how hard this would be, she said yes.

We also have a choice. We are not here merely to remember what happened so long ago on a cold night in Bethlehem. Like Mary, God is asking us: Will you bear Christ into the world? Will you carry Jesus in your heart?

Our road is different from Mary's, but it is challenging in its own way. A new baby always changes things. Your life is no longer your own. If you agree to let Jesus be born again tonight, your life will change, maybe in ways you don't expect. So be careful how you answer.

The Christmas story can so easily be lost under a sentimental blanket of snow, with cows gently lowing and stars brightly shining. This is true with the carols we sing, too. They are so familiar that we sometimes miss the real meaning. For example: "It came upon the midnight clear." The real interesting stuff in this carol happens in verse 3. This is true of most Christmas carols, actually. The real theology happens two or three verses in. Here's the 3rd verse of "it came upon a midnight clear": "Yet, with woes of sin and strife the world has suffered long; beneath the heavenly hymn have rolled two thousand years of wrong, and warring humankind hears not the tidings which they bring; O hush the noise and cease your strife and hear the angels sing."

And here's the second verse of "In the bleak mid-winter": "Our God – heaven cannot hold him, nor earth sustain; heaven and earth shall flee away when he comes to reign."

Christina Rossetti, who wrote this carol, is making a bold theological claim in this verse. When God comes – heaven and earth will "flee away." Heaven and earth as we know them now – everything we know, everything we see – will simply stop. Vanish. And then what? What comes next? Well, what comes next – what happens when God comes – is what Rossetti wants us to think about.

Perhaps the best example of Christmas carol theology is "O Little Town of Bethlehem." The first couple of verses are sweet, almost cloying – all those "Christmas angels" and "silent stars." But Phillips Brooks, the famous 19th century preacher who wrote this

carol, knew what he was doing. He has given us a perfect sermon in miniature. Here is the last line:

“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;
O come to us, abide in us, our Lord Emmanuel.”

The carol has gotten rather serious by this fifth verse, “Cast out our sin and enter in, be born in us today” – not so sweet, is it? It may be what we need – it may even be what we want, what we are praying for – but it doesn’t sound easy.

“Cast out our sin” brings to mind some lines from the *Magnificat*, the Song that Mary sings after she hears from Gabriel that she is pregnant:

“{God} has cast down the mighty from their thrones,
And has lifted up the lowly.
He has filled the hungry with good things,
And the rich he has sent away empty.”

There’s some resonance between God’s tearing our sin from us and casting it out, as in the carol, and God casting down the mighty from their thrones, sending the rich away, empty. Being sent away empty isn’t a punishment, you see – it’s a blessing. If we allow God to cast out our sin – if we allow God to empty us out – then we will be blessed indeed, just as Mary was.

And what is it, exactly, that we need to be rid of this year? What is the sin that needs casting out, the thing that keeps getting in the way of God being born in us? Our desire to be important? To have all the right things? To have more than we need?

What is it that occupies your heart this Christmas? Maybe it’s sadness, frustration, anger? The feeling that you’re not good enough or smart enough or kind enough? Or maybe you’re lonely or afraid?

Whatever is in there, God want to be in your heart, too. And if you let God in, even just a little bit: **Watch Out!** Cast out our sin and enter in. He has sent the rich away, empty.

It is only after we have been emptied – of all the ridiculous things, all the needless stuff that gets in the way of God’s love – only when we are emptied of these worries, these desires, are we ready to be filled with the love of God. Only when we are empty can *Christ be born in us*. Only when we are empty will Christmas come. We can sing the carols and put out the crèche, but unless we are willing to be emptied out, there won’t be any place for God to live.

This is the inside work, the thing that must happen inside our hearts, in order for the outside work to move forward. And the outside work is the coming of the Kingdom of God.

Heaven and earth shall flee away, you see, when he comes to reign. We are being asked to bear God into the world, just as Mary did. And just like Mary, we know that this is not going to be easy, and it's going to change everything. Are we brave enough to do this, knowing that if God's kingdom really comes, our lives change forever? Are we willing to be cast down, emptied out, so that God may be raised up?

This labour, this bringing about the Kingdom of God, will not be easy. But this is Christmas; the time has come, and our call is to bear Jesus into the world, just as Mary bore him so long ago.

We are called to put flesh on the values of God's kingdom, to put hands and feet and brains and shoulders to work for peace and justice and love.

Come to us, abide with us, our Lord Emmanuel. Be born in us today.

Merry Christmas. 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

With wonder and thanksgiving for Christ's coming into the world, we pray for the church, the life of the earth, and the whole human family.

Your infinite love is born to us this night. With choirs of angels the church proclaims the good news. Send us out as messengers of the hope that has come to all people. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

You are pleased to dwell with your creatures and the whole earth sings for joy. Renew the splendor of creation from the smallest cell to the widest galaxies. Guide us to be wise stewards of your gifts for the sake of generations to come. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Your authority is over the nations. Break the rod of oppression in every land and free all people from fear. Bring peace where there is war, compassion where there is suffering, and healing where there is disease. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

You cherish those who are most vulnerable. Protect infants and children, and bless those who care for them. Watch over women giving birth, attend the dying, and relieve any who are in pain. Shelter refugee families and those who have no home. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Your lovingkindness embraces everyone in need. Help any for whom this season is lonely or joyless. Comfort those among us, or known to us, who are experiencing distress of body or mind, missing loved ones, or grieving. God of grace, **hear 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; Dorothy

Needing our prayers: Ed; Pastor Mike & Patti, Donna; Sharon B; Jeffrey; Art; Joan; Olga

Friends and Family of our Members Needing our prayers: Audrey; Greg; Hilda; Mary; Anna; Jean

...and all members who may have needs unknown to us

And all those we name in our hearts...

God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

You welcome those who have died into the joyous light of glory. We give thanks for the saints of every time and place who have praised you with lives of faith and humility. Inspire us by their example to love you by serving others. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Pondering the mystery of eternal love made flesh in Christ Jesus, we commend all for whom we pray to the mercy of God. **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

God bless you and keep you, ✝ Jesus grant you grace and truth, and the Spirit send peace upon your hearts, now and forever. **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

Christ the Savior is born! Go in peace. Proclaim this good news. **Thanks be to God!**