

*“Do not be afraid; for see – I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord.”*

*~Luke 2:10-11*

**St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church**

**Christmas Day – December 25, 2023**

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Rev. Katie McNeal, Presiding Minister

Maizy Fisher, Director of Music Ministries

*We are delighted to have you worship with us this morning!  
Know that you are welcome here just as you are.*

*If you are looking for a church to call home, why not consider making this one your own?  
If this is your first time visiting us, please fill out the visitor information card stapled to  
your bulletin.*

*Everything you need to follow worship can be found in this bulletin. As you are  
comfortable, please rise when there is an \* and join in the congregational responses,  
noted in **bold**.*

*All songs are marked with numbers. The red book in the pew has all the songs. Look for  
the large number in the upper corner of the page to find the correct song.*

*During the time of **Peace**, you are invited to turn to those around you and offer a word of  
peace. We suggest a handshake and saying, "Peace be with you." You are also welcome to  
offer another gesture of peace (wave, fist-bump, smile, etc.). Hand sanitizer is available in  
each pew.*

*At the time of **Offering**, you are invited to share a gift. You may also offer updates to our  
ongoing prayer list using the yellow cards in the pews and placing them in the offering  
plates. Visitor information cards and member attendance cards (attached to the front of  
the bulletin) may also be placed in the offering plates.*

*At the time of **Holy Communion**, all are welcome to come forward via the center aisle,  
receive the elements, and return via the side aisles. We begin at the front of the right side,  
commune all on the right side, then we will invite the left side forward. When you come  
forward, you may receive the bread from the pastor (gluten free wafers are available),  
then pre-filled cups with wine or grape juice from the assisting minister. You may consume  
the elements after receiving them then place the empty cup in the tray held by the acolyte.  
Those who do not receive Holy Communion are welcome to come forward for a blessing.*

*If you need a restroom, restrooms are located on the bottom floor at the far side of the  
building from the elevator. Restrooms may be accessed either via the stairs in the rear of  
the sanctuary, the stairs by the Greeting Area, or the elevator.*

## **PRELUDE and ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **WELCOME**

#### **\*CALL TO WORSHIP**

I have good news!

**I have good news!**

Christ is born!

**Christ is born!**

Joy is alive!

**Joy is alive!**

God is here!

**God is here!**

Thanks be to God.

**Thanks be to God.**

Amen and amen!

**Amen and amen!**

#### **\*CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS**

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, God who is faithful and just will forgive our sins. Let us confess our sins before God and one another.

Gracious God

**We confess that too often we hoard our joy, our resources, and our security.**

**We nurture conflict and build barriers.**

**We neglect the needs of our neighbors and ignore the groaning of creation.**

**Have mercy on us.**

**Where we are self-centered, open our hearts.**

**Where we are reluctant, give us courage.**

**Where we are cynical, restore our trust.**

**Forgive us for the ways that we have rejected you and rebelled against you.**

**Renew us with your grace**

**and give us again the hope of eternal life in you. Amen.**

*Receiving the gift of forgiveness*

**\*SONG *Cold December Flies Away* (ELW 299)**



1 Cold De - cem - ber flies a - way at the rose - red splen - dor.  
 2 In the hope - less time of sin shad - ows deep had fall - en.  
 3 Now the bud has come to bloom, and the world a - wak - ens.



A - pril's crown - ing glo - ry breaks while the whole world won - ders  
 All the world lay un - der death. Eyes were closed in sleep - ing.  
 In the lil - y's pur - est flow'r dwells a won - drous fra - grance.



at the ho - ly un - seen pow'r of the tree which bears the  
 But, when all seemed lost in night, came the sun whose gold - en  
 And it spreads to all the earth from the mo - ment of its



flow'r. On the bless - ed tree blooms the red - dest flow'r. On the tree blooms the  
 light brings un - end - ing joy, brings the end - less joy of our hope, high - est  
 birth; and its beau - ty lives. In the flow'r it lives, in the flow'r, and it



rose here in love's own gar - den, full and strong in glo - ry.  
 hope, of our hope's bright dawn - ing, Son be - lov'd of heav - en.  
 spreads in its heav'n - ly bright - ness sweet per - fume de - light - ful.

**INTRODUCTION TO THE READINGS**

Sometimes when we've heard a story told lots of times, we can stop listening. We're no longer surprised by it as we know what to expect, or at least we think we do! The Christmas story can be a bit like that.... So let's listen to the story again as if it is the first time that we have heard it, and be surprised by what God did!

**SCRIPTURE: Luke 2:1-5**

In those days Caesar Augustus declared that everyone throughout the empire should be enrolled in the tax lists. <sup>2</sup>This first enrollment occurred when Quirinius governed Syria. <sup>3</sup>Everyone went to their own cities to be enrolled. <sup>4</sup>Since Joseph belonged to David's house and family line, he went up from the city of Nazareth in Galilee to David's city, called Bethlehem, in Judea. <sup>5</sup>He went to be enrolled together with Mary, who was promised to him in marriage and who was pregnant.

## THE FIRST GIFT

### SCRIPTURE: Luke 2:6-7

<sup>6</sup> While they were there, the time came for Mary to have her baby. <sup>7</sup> She gave birth to her firstborn child, a son, wrapped him snugly, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the guestroom.

## THE SECOND GIFT

### \*HYMN OF THE DAY *That Boy Child of Mary* (ELW 293)

*Refrain*



That boy - child of Mar - y was born in a sta - ble,



a man - ger his cra - dle in Beth - le - hem.



- 1 What shall we call him, child of the man - ger?
- 2 His name is Je - sus, God ev - er with us,
- 3 How can he save us, how can he help us,
- 4 Gift of the Fa - ther, to hu - man moth - er,



*Refrain*

What name is giv - en in Beth - le - hem?  
God giv - en for us in Beth - le - hem.  
born here a - mong us in Beth - le - hem?  
makes him our broth - er in Beth - le - hem.

### SCRIPTURE: Luke 2:7

<sup>7</sup> She gave birth to her firstborn child, a son, wrapped him snugly, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the guestroom.

## THE THIRD GIFT

### **SCRIPTURE: Luke 2:8-18**

<sup>8</sup> Nearby shepherds were living in the fields, guarding their sheep at night. <sup>9</sup> The Lord's angel stood before them, the Lord's glory shone around them, and they were terrified. <sup>10</sup> The angel said, "Don't be afraid! Look! I bring good news to you—wonderful, joyous news for all people. <sup>11</sup> Your savior is born today in David's city. He is Christ the Lord. <sup>12</sup> This is a sign for you: you will find a newborn baby wrapped snugly and lying in a manger." <sup>13</sup> Suddenly a great assembly of the heavenly forces was with the angel praising God. They said, <sup>14</sup> "Glory to God in heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors." <sup>15</sup> 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." <sup>16</sup> They went quickly and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger. <sup>17</sup> When they saw this, they reported what they had been told about this child. <sup>18</sup> Everyone who heard it was amazed at what the shepherds told them.

### **THE FOURTH GIFT**

#### **SCRIPTURE: Matthew 2:1-2, 9b-12**

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in the territory of Judea during the rule of King Herod, magi came from the east to Jerusalem. <sup>2</sup> They asked, "Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We've seen his star in the east, and we've come to honor him." <sup>9</sup> [The magi] went; and look, the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stood over the place where the child was. <sup>10</sup> When they saw the star, they were filled with joy. <sup>11</sup> They entered the house and saw the child with Mary his mother. Falling to their knees, they honored him. Then they opened their treasure chests and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. <sup>12</sup> Because they were warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they went back to their own country by another route.

### **THE FIFTH GIFT**

**SONG *Once in Royal David's City* (ELW 269)**



1 Once in roy - al Da - vid's cit - y stood a low - ly cat - tle shed,  
2 He came down to earth from heav-en who is God and Lord of all,  
3 And our eyes at last shall see him, through his own re - deem - ing love;  
4 Not in that poor low - ly sta - ble, with the ox - en stand - ing by,



where a moth - er laid her ba - by in a man - ger for his bed:  
and his shel - ter was a sta - ble, and his cra - dle was a stall;  
for that child so dear and gen - tle is our Lord in heav'n a - bove;  
we shall see him; but in heav - en, set at God's right hand on high;



Mar - y was that moth - er mild, Je - sus Christ, her lit - tle child.  
with the poor and meek and low - ly, lived on earth our Sav - ior ho - ly.  
and he leads his chil - dren on to the place where he is gone.  
there his chil - dren gath - er round, bright like stars, with glo - ry crowned.

**\*APOSTLES' CREED**

With the whole church, let us confess our faith.

**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 INTERCESSION**

Friends, we gather now for a time of prayer. In a few moments, I will invite you to lift up both the concerns weighing heavy on your heart as well as deep joys and celebrations. When prompted, please speak your prayers out loud, and as we listen to one another, may we know that God is listening too. Through song and spoken words, let us pray:

***Sung Response: 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?***

God of love, as we look inwards, toward our own community and personal lives, we are keenly aware of our deep need for you, as well as the countless ways you have already blessed us. We offer our prayers for those whom we know and our local community to you now... *(pause for spoken prayers)*

***Sung Response: So bring Him incense, gold and myrrh, Come Peasant, King to own  
Him The King of Kings salvation brings, Let loving hearts enthrone Him.***

God of comfort, our world is crying out from near and far, groaning in pain. Thus we come to you, voicing concerns for our world, your good creation and the people in it. We offer our prayers for those whom we have not yet met and our world to you now... *(pause for spoken prayers)*

***Sung Response: This, this is Christ the King, Whom shepherds guard and  
Angels sing Haste, haste, to bring Him laud, The Babe, the Son of Mary.***

God of abundance, you have given us absolutely everything we have—from the magic of snowfall and tall strong evergreens, to the smell of good food and the sound of laughter. We give you thanks for all that we have in you. Guide us to use the gifts given to us to share your love in this world. We pray you take and use these gifts. Use them for your good so that others may be filled with your joy born this Christmas morning. And as you work, mold in us ever more generous hearts. In gratitude we pray, **Amen.**

## **\*SETTING THE TABLE**



**\*GREAT THANKSGIVING**

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts.

**We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

In the wonder and mystery of the Word made flesh  
God opens the eyes of faith  
to a new and radiant vision of God's glory,  
that, beholding the God made visible,  
we may be drawn to love the God whom we cannot see.

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.  
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,  
shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin.  
Do this for the remembrance of me.

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us 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**

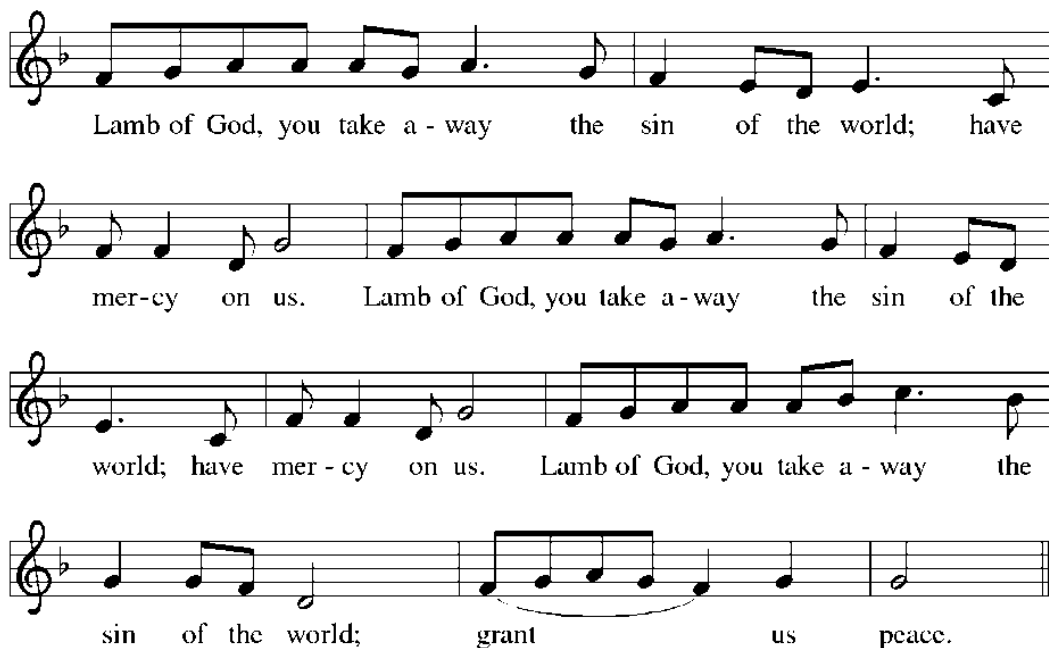
## \*INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Glory to God in the highest! Come to the table of peace.

*Through this meal, we know forgiveness, life, and salvation as the blessings of God's sacramental grace. In response to Jesus' invitation, all are welcome to come forward and experience the real presence of Christ in the bread and wine. Those who do not receive the bread and wine are invited to come forward for a blessing.*

*Grape juice and gluten free wafers are available upon request. Communion may also be brought back to the pews for those who are unable to come forward.*

## COMMUNION SONG *Lamb of God*



The image shows the musical notation for the Communion Song 'Lamb of God'. It consists of four staves of music in a single system, each with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The lyrics are written below the notes. The first staff contains the lyrics 'Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the world; have'. The second staff contains 'mer-cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the'. The third staff contains 'world; have mer - cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a - way the'. The fourth staff contains 'sin of the world; grant us peace.' The word 'grant' is underlined with a curved line.

Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the world; have  
mer-cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the  
world; have mer - cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a - way the  
sin of the world; grant us peace.

## DISTRIBUTION OF COMMUNION

**COMMUNION HYMN *Let Our Gladness Have No End* (ELW 291)**



1 Let our glad - ness have no end, Hal - le - lu - jah!  
 2 Proph - e - sies in days of old, Hal - le - lu - jah!  
 3 See the love - liest bloom - ing rose, Hal - le - lu - jah!  
 4 In - to flesh is made the Word, Hal - le - lu - jah!



for to earth did Christ de - scend. Hal - le - lu - jah!  
 God has sent the one fore - told. Hal - le - lu - jah!  
 from the branch of Jes - se grows. Hal - le - lu - jah!  
 our true ref - uge and our Lord. Hal - le - lu - jah!

*Refrain*



On this day God gave us Christ, the Son, to



save us; Christ, the Son, to save us.

**\*POST-COMMUNION PRAYER**

God our redeemer, you have fed us at this table  
 with gifts of grace, truth, and life.  
 As you have gathered us in joy,  
 send us forth as messengers of your peace.  
 Make us shine with the good news of your glory,  
 Born to us in Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.  
**Amen.**

**\*BLESSING**

May God the Creator nourish you and keep you  
 may God the Savior grant you grace and truth,  
 may God the Spirit send peace upon your hearts,  
 + now and forever.  
**Amen.**

**\*SENDING SONG *Go Tell it on the Mountain* (ELW 290)**

*Refrain*

Go tell it on the moun - tain, o-ver the hills and ev - 'ry - where;

go tell it on the moun - tain that Je - sus Christ is born!

1 While shep-herds kept their watch-ing o'er si - lent flocks by night,  
2 The shep-herds feared and trem-bled when, lo, a - bove the earth  
3 Down in a lone - ly man - ger the hum-ble Christ was born;

*Refrain*

be - hold, through-out the heav-ens there shone a ho - ly light.  
rang out the an - gel cho - rus that hailed our Sav - ior's birth.  
and God sent us sal - va - tion that bless-ed Christ-mas morn.

**\*DISMISSAL**

Glory to God in the highest!  
**Peace to God's people on earth!**  
Christ the Savior is born!  
Go in peace. Proclaim this good news.  
**Thanks be to God.**

**POSTLUDE**

**Today's Music**

*Cold December Flies Away.* Text: Catalanian carol; tr. Howard Hawhee, b. 1953, Music: Catalanian carol. Augsburg Fortress / Public Domain.

*Once in Royal David's City.* Text: Cecil Frances Alexander, 1818-1895, Music: Henry J. Gauntlett, 1805-1876. Public Domain.

*That Boy-Child of Mary.* Text: Tom Colvin, 1925-2000, Music: Malawi traditional; adapt. Tom Colvin. Hope Publishing Company (ASCAP).

*Let Our Gladness Have No End.* Text: Bohemian carol, 15th cent.; tr. unknown, Music: Bohemian carol, 15th cent.. Public Domain / Augsburg Fortress.

*Go Tell It on the Mountain.* Text: African American spiritual, refrain; John W. Work Jr., 1872-1925, stanzas, alt. Music: African American spiritual. Public Domain.

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*Midrash Reflection of the Shepherd* by Sarah Are for A Sanctified Art, *The World's Child*