

*Introduction to the day: 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.*

## **GATHERING**

*The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God.*

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### **WELCOME**

### **GATHERING SONG**

*O Come All Ye Faithful*

ELW 283

*Please mute yourself and follow the lead of our musicians for this and all of today's songs*

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!

2 The highest, most holy, light of light eternal,  
born of a virgin, a mortal he comes;  
Son of the Father now in flesh appearing! *Refrain*

3 Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation,  
sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!  
Glory to God in the highest: *Refrain*

4 Yea, Lord, we greet thee, born this happy morning;  
Jesus, to thee be glory giv'n!  
Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing: *Refrain*

### **DIALOGUE**

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.

**The light shines in the darkness,  
and the darkness has not overcome it.**

Those who dwelt in the land of deep darkness, on them light has shined.

**We have beheld Christ's glory,  
Glory as of the only Son from the Father.**

To us a child is born, to us a Son is given.

**In the Word was life,  
and the life was the light of all people. Amen.**

## LESSONS AND CAROLS

**READING ONE:** Isaiah 9:2-7 (Kary Pfennig)

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

<sup>3</sup> You 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.

<sup>4</sup> For 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.

<sup>5</sup> For all the boots of the tramping warriors and all the garments rolled in blood  
shall be burned as fuel for the fire.

<sup>6</sup> For 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.

<sup>7</sup> His 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.

**SONG:** *Away in a Manger* ELW 277

<sup>1</sup> Away in a manger, no crib for his 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.

<sup>2</sup> The cattle are lowing; the baby awakes,  
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.

<sup>3</sup> 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.

**READING TWO:** Micah 5:2-5a (Barb Morris)

<sup>2</sup> But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah, who are one of the little clans of Judah,  
from you shall come forth for me one who is to rule in Israel,  
whose origin is from of old, from ancient days. <sup>3</sup> Therefore he shall give them up  
until the time when she who is in labor has brought forth;  
then the rest of his kindred shall return to the people of Israel.

<sup>4</sup> And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the LORD,

in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. And they shall live secure,  
for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth; <sup>5</sup>and he shall be the one of peace.

**SONG:** *O Little Town of Bethlehem* ELW 279

<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> 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!

<sup>3</sup> 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.

<sup>4</sup> 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!

**READING THREE:** Luke 1:26-35, 38 (Allen Dunn)

<sup>26</sup>In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, <sup>27</sup>to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. <sup>28</sup>And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." <sup>29</sup>But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. <sup>30</sup>The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. <sup>31</sup>And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. <sup>32</sup>He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. <sup>33</sup>He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." <sup>34</sup>Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" <sup>35</sup>The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. <sup>38</sup>Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

**SONG:** *Hark the Herald Angels Sing* ELW 270

<sup>1</sup> 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!"

*Refrain*

Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn king!"

<sup>2</sup> Christ, by highest heav'n adored, Christ, the everlasting Lord,  
late in time behold him come, offspring of a virgin's womb.  
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see! Hail, incarnate deity!  
Pleased as man with us to dwell, Jesus, our Emmanuel! *Refrain*

<sup>3</sup> Hail the heav'n-born Prince of peace! Hail the Sun of righteousness!  
Light and life to all he brings, ris'n with healing in his wings.  
Mild he lays his glory by, born that we no more may die,  
born to raise each child of earth, born to give us second birth. *Refrain*

**READING FOUR:** Luke 2:1-7 (*Linda Dunn*)

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

**SONG:** *Infant Holy, Infant Lowly* ELW 276

<sup>1</sup> 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!

<sup>2</sup> Flocks were sleeping, shepherds keeping vigil till the morning new  
saw the glory, heard the story, tidings of a gospel true.  
Thus rejoicing, free from sorrow, praises voicing, greet the morrow:  
Christ the child was born for you! Christ the child was born for you!

**READING FIVE:** Luke 2:8-16 (*Nancy Garman*)

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

<sup>14</sup>"Glory to God in the highest heaven,  
and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"

<sup>15</sup>When 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." <sup>16</sup>So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger.

**SONG:**        *Angels We Have Heard on High*    ELW 289

<sup>1</sup> Angels we have heard on high, sweetly singing o'er the plains,  
and the mountains in reply, echoing their joyous strains.

*Refrain*

Gloria in excelsis Deo; gloria in excelsis Deo.

<sup>2</sup> Shepherds, why this jubilee? Why your joyous strains prolong?  
What the gladsome tidings be which inspire your heav'nly song?    *Refrain*

<sup>3</sup> Come to Bethlehem and see him whose birth the angels sing;  
come, adore on bended knee Christ the Lord, the newborn king.    *Refrain*

**READING SIX:**        Luke 2:21-35                    (Bruce Seiler)

<sup>21</sup>After eight days had passed, it was time to circumcise the child; and he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

<sup>22</sup>When the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord <sup>23</sup>(as it is written in the law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord"), <sup>24</sup>and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, "a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons."

<sup>25</sup>Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. <sup>26</sup>It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. <sup>27</sup>Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him what was customary under the law, <sup>28</sup>Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying,

<sup>29</sup>"Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word;

<sup>30</sup>for my eyes have seen your salvation, <sup>31</sup>which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, <sup>32</sup>a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel."

<sup>33</sup>And the child's father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. <sup>34</sup>Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, "This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed <sup>35</sup>so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed — and a sword will pierce your own soul too."

**SONG:**        *It Came Upon a Midnight Clear*    ELW 282

<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> Still through the cloven skies they come with peaceful wings unfurled,  
and still their heav'nly music floats o'er all the weary world.  
Above its sad and lowly plains they bend on hov'ring wing,  
and ever o'er its babel sounds the blessed angels sing.

<sup>3</sup> And you, beneath life's crushing load, whose forms are bending low,  
who toil along the climbing way with painful steps and slow:  
look now, for glad and golden hours come swiftly on the wing;  
oh, rest beside the weary road and hear the angels sing!

<sup>4</sup> For lo! The days are hast'ning on, by prophets seen of old,  
when with the ever-circling years shall come the time foretold,  
when peace shall over all the earth its ancient splendors fling,  
and all the world give back the song which now the angels sing.

## **KIDS MESSAGE** (Pastor Ron)

### **READING SEVEN:** Matthew 2:1-11 (Terri Larson)

<sup>1</sup>In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, <sup>2</sup>asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage." <sup>3</sup>When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; <sup>4</sup>and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. <sup>5</sup>They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet:

<sup>6</sup>'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.'"

<sup>7</sup>Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. <sup>8</sup>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." <sup>9</sup>When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. <sup>10</sup>When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. <sup>11</sup>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.

### **SONG:** *The First Noel* ELW 300

<sup>1</sup> 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.

*Refrain:* Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel! Born is the King of Israel.

<sup>2</sup> They looked up and saw a star shining in the east beyond them far;  
and to the earth it gave great light, and so it continued both day and night. *Refrain*

<sup>3</sup> And by the light of that same star three wise men came from country far;  
to seek for a king was their intent, and to follow the star wherever it went. *Refrain*

<sup>4</sup> This star drew near to the northwest, o'er Bethlehem it took its rest;  
and there it did both stop and stay right over the place where Jesus lay. *Refrain*

<sup>5</sup> Then entered in those wise men three, full rev'rently upon their knee,  
and offered there in his presence their gold, and myrrh, and frankincense. *Refrain*

**READING EIGHT:** Matthew 2:13-18 (Barb Morris)

<sup>13</sup>Now after they had left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him." <sup>14</sup>Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt, <sup>15</sup>and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, "Out of Egypt I have called my son."

<sup>16</sup>When Herod saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, he was infuriated, and he sent and killed all the children in and around Bethlehem who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had learned from the wise men. <sup>17</sup>Then was fulfilled what had been spoken through the prophet Jeremiah:

<sup>18</sup>"A voice was heard in Ramah,  
wailing and loud lamentation,  
Rachel weeping for her children;  
she refused to be consoled, because they are no more."

**SONG:** *Joy to the World* ELW 267

<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> Joy to the earth, the Savior reigns! Let all their songs employ,  
while fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains repeat the sounding joy,  
repeat the sounding joy, repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

<sup>3</sup> No more let sin and sorrow grow nor thorns infest the ground;  
he comes to make his blessings flow far as the curse is found,  
far as the curse is found, far as, far as the curse is found.

<sup>4</sup> 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.

**READING NINE:** John 1:1-14 (Linda Dunn)

<sup>1</sup>In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup>He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup>All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being <sup>4</sup>in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. <sup>5</sup>The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

<sup>6</sup>There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. <sup>7</sup>He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. <sup>8</sup>He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. <sup>9</sup>The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

<sup>10</sup>He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. <sup>11</sup>He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. <sup>12</sup>But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, <sup>13</sup>who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

<sup>14</sup>And 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.

*Refrain*

Go tell it on the mountain, over the hills and ev'rywhere;  
Go tell it on the mountain that Jesus Christ is born!

<sup>1</sup> While shepherds kept their watching o'er silent flocks by night,  
behold, throughout the heavens there shone a holy light. *Refrain*

<sup>2</sup> The shepherds feared and trembled when, lo, above the earth  
rang out the angel chorus that hailed our Savior's birth. *Refrain*

<sup>3</sup> Down in a lonely manger the humble Christ was born;  
and God sent us salvation that blessed Christmas morn. *Refrain*

## **RESPONSIVE PRAYER**

Glory to God in the heights,  
**and peace to God's people on earth.**

Blessed are you, Prince of peace.

You rule the earth and truth and justice.

**Send your gift of peace to all nations of the world.**

Blessed are you, Son of Mary.

You share our humanity.

**Have mercy on the sick, the dying, and all  
who suffer this day.**

Blessed are you, Son of God.

You dwell among us as the Word made flesh.

**Reveal yourself to us in word and sacrament that  
we may bear your light to all the world.**

## **PEACE**

The peace of Christ be with you always.

**And also with you.**

## **MEAL**

*God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ.*

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## **OFFERING**

*We acknowledge that all we have is a gift from God and in gratefulness  
we return to God a portion of the time, finances, and gifts that God has given us.  
Thank you so much for your continued support in these unusual times.*

## **OFFERING**

Gracious God, you came to us as one unknown, bringing joy and salvation to the earth. Nourish us at your banquet table, that with all who welcome your birth we may proclaim your peace, revealed in Jesus Christ, our Savior. **Amen.**



## **EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER**

Father, on the night before he died, Jesus shared a meal with his friends. He took the bread, and thanked you. He broke it, and gave it to them, saying: Take and eat; this is my body, given for you. Do this to remember me.

After the meal, Jesus took the cup of wine. He thanked you, and gave it to them, saying: Drink this, all of you. This is my blood, the new promise of God's unfailing love. Do this to remember me.

Great is the mystery of faith:

**Christ has died:**

**Christ is risen:**

**Christ will come again.**

Father, as we bring this bread and wine, and remember his death and resurrection, send your Holy Spirit, that we who share these gifts may be fed by Christ's body and his blood. Pour your Spirit on us that we may love one another, work for the healing of the earth, and share the good news of Jesus, as we wait for his coming in glory.

For honor and praise belong to you, Father, with Jesus your Son, and the Holy Spirit: one God, forever and ever.

## **LORD'S PRAYER** (ELW p. 112)

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.**

## **COMMUNION**

*During this time, you are invited to take communion in your home  
or to be in a time of prayer.*

## **COMMUNION PRAYER**

We give you thanks, gracious God, that you have once again fed us from your very self with the body and blood of Christ. Through this mystery, send us forth to proclaim your promise to a world in need, through the same Jesus Christ, our Savior. **Amen.**

# SENDING

*God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world.*

## BLESSING AND DISMISSAL

Let us bless the Lord  
**Thanks be to God.**

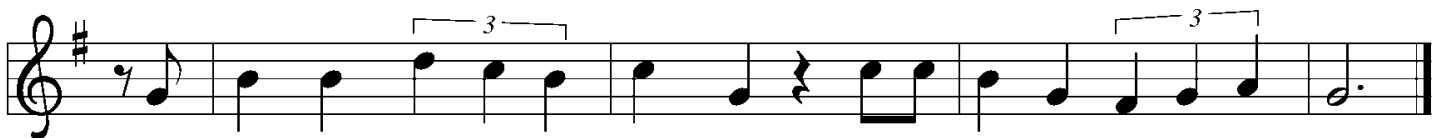
May you be filled with the wonder of Mary,  
the obedience of Joseph,  
the joy of the angels,  
the eagerness of the shepherds,  
the determination of the magi,  
and the peace of the Christ child.  
Almighty God, Father, & Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you  
now and forever.

**Amen.**

### SENDING SONG: *He Came Down* ELW 253



- 1 He came down that we may have love; he came down that we may have love;
- 2 He came down that we may have light; he came down that we may have light;
- 3 He came down that we may have peace; he came down that we may have peace;
- 4 He came down that we may have joy; he came down that we may have joy;



he came down that we may have love;  
he came down that we may have light; hal - le - lu - jah for - ev - er - more.  
he came down that we may have peace;  
he came down that we may have joy;

Text: Cameroon traditional

Music: HE CAME DOWN, Cameroon traditional