

PEACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

4672 N Cedar Ave. Fresno, CA 93726

Rev. Dennis A. Wenholz

Rev. Khai N. Lee

The Nativity Of Our Lord: Christmas Eve December 24, 2022

The Mission of Peace Lutheran Church is to honor our Lord Jesus Christ through worship and ministering to all God's people, equipping them for service to God and to each other.

WELCOME!

Let us celebrate the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ! Tonight's Christmas Eve service is one of scripture and hymns. The scriptures and accompanying narratives are the Christmas message and will be read by the Pastors; therefore, there is no sermon. You are encouraged to sing all hymns, or you may just enjoy the music in your heart as you worship the King!

SILENT PRAYER BEFORE WORSHIP

THE PRELUDE

Organist

CALL TO WORSHIP

Peace Handbell Choir

"Christmas Exaltation" -- Michael E. Akers

OPENING HYMN (stand) "O Come, All Ye Faithful" LSB 379

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!



*Highest, most holy, Light of Light eternal,
Born of a virgin, a mortal He comes;
Son of the Father, Now in flesh appearing! (Refrain)*

*Sing, choirs of angels, Sing in exultation,
Sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!
Glory to God-- In the highest: (Refrain)*

*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)*

Pastor: Let us begin in the name of the Father,
and of the ☩ Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

HYMN "Hark the Glad Sound" LSB 349 (v. 1)
**Hark the glad sound! The Savior comes,
The Savior promised long;
Let ev'ry heart prepare a throne
And ev'ry voice a song.**

The Old Testament Prophecies

The Christmas story begins with Old Testament prophets. More than 700 years before Jesus' birth, Micah was talking to the common people of Judah about their travails when he drops in this little nugget of hope. Ephrathah was the ancient name for Bethlehem.

Micah 5:2

"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times."

HYMN "Savior of the Nations, Come" LSB 332 (v. 1)
**Savior of the nations, come,
Virgin's Son, make here Your home!
Marvel now, O heaven and earth,
That the Lord chose such a birth.**

The Isaiah Prophecy

Isaiah followed Micah by 50 or so years. He came from an upper-class family, rubbed shoulders with royalty, and was a prophet to the court at Jerusalem. In Chapter 9, he is providing hope for the future of Judah when he includes these familiar prophetic verses memorialized by Handel.

Isaiah 9:6-7

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.

HYMN "Angels We Have Heard on High" LSB 368 (v. 1-2)
**Angels we have heard on high,
Sweetly singing o'er the plains,
And the mountains in reply,
Echoing their joyous strains.
Gloria—in excelsis deo. Gloria—in excelsis deo.**

**Shepherds, why this jubilee?
Why your joyous strains prolong?
What the gladsome tidings be
Which inspire your heav'nly song?**

Gloria—in excelsis deo. Gloria—in excelsis deo.

The New Testament beginning with Matthew

The story of Jesus' birth continues into the New Testament. The Christmas story is told in both Matthew and Luke. The Gospel of Matthew was written to Jews to answer their questions about Jesus. Matthew begins his Gospel message with Jesus' genealogy beginning with Abraham. He then provides a synoptic picture of Jesus' birth.

Matthew 1:18-24

This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.” All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: “The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel” —which means, “God with us.” When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. But he had no union with her until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.

HYMN “Savior of the Nations, Come” LSB 332 (v. 2-3)
Not by human flesh and blood,

**By the Spirit of our God
Was the Word of God made flesh—
Woman’s offspring, pure and fresh.**

**Here a maid was found with child,
Yet remained a virgin mild.
In her womb this truth was shown:
God was there upon His throne.**

The Christmas Story told by St. Luke

Luke was a physician and the author of both the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts. Luke was a close friend and frequent traveling companion of Paul. Just as Dr. Watson accompanied and chronicled the adventures of Sherlock Holmes, a loose analogy might be made of Luke and Paul. Luke converted to Christianity after Jesus' death and resurrection, so he relied heavily on eyewitness accounts for those events that he himself did not witness. Beginning with verse 5 of the first chapter, Luke tells the story of Zechariah's encounter with an angel where the birth of John the Baptist is foretold. Luke continues with Mary's encounter with an angel where she is told of the unbelievable events that are to come.

Luke 1:26-38

In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin’s name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, “Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.” Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will be with child

and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end." "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?" The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be barren is in her sixth month. For nothing is impossible with God." "I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May it be to me as you have said." Then the angel left her.

SPECIAL MUSIC *"Gesu Bambino"*
Jim Turpin, tenor *David Slonski, accompanist*

HYMN "Savior of the Nations, Come" LSB 332 (v. 5-7)

**God the Father was His source,
Back to God He ran His course.
Into hell His road went down,
Back then to His throne and crown.**

**For You are the Father's Son
Who in flesh the vict'ry won.
By Your mighty pow'r make whole,
All our ills of flesh and soul.**

**From the manger newborn light
Shines in glory through the night.
Darkness there no more resides;
In this light faith now abides.**

Mary Visits Elizabeth

We can assume that Mary was pretty much beside herself with her emotional responses to the angel's visit. Given the similarity of their encounters with angels, Mary decides to visit and to share her anticipations with Elizabeth, wife of Zechariah and the expectant mother of John the Baptist.

Luke 1:39-45

At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. In a loud voice she exclaimed: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed is she who has believed that what the Lord has said to her will be accomplished!"

HYMN "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" LSB 357 (v. 1, 5)

**O come, O come, Emmanuel,
And ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appear.
*Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel!***

**O come, Thou Key of David, come,
And open wide our heav'nly home;
Make safe the way that leads on high,
And close the path to misery.
*Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel***

Shall come to thee, O Israel!

The Magnificat

Mary's song is known as the Magnificat, which apparently comes from the first word of the Latin translation. This much-loved piece of our Christian tradition contains 15 discernible quotations from the Old Testament, indicating how well the Old Testament was known by Jesus' mother-to-be. The Magnificat was Mary's response to her growing realization of just what her role in God's plan was to be. Because of its beauty and elegance, the Magnificat was no doubt inspired by the Holy Spirit.

Luke 1:46-56

And Mary said: "My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me— holy is his name. His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation. He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants forever, even as he said to our fathers." Mary stayed with Elizabeth for about three months and then returned home.

The Birth of Jesus

Luke completes Chapter 1 of his Gospel with the story of the birth and circumcision of Elizabeth's son, John the Baptist. He then moves on to Chapter 2, which contains one of the most well-known stories of the Bible. Luke sets the stage before writing of Jesus' birth.

Luke 2:1-7

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) And everyone went to his own town to register. So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

HYMN

"Infant Holy, Infant Lowly"

LSB 393

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!

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!

The Angels and the Shepherds

Following Jesus' birth, Luke tells the story of the shepherds. We all know and love this story. There seem to be more Christmas carols singing about the shepherds than any other part of the Christmas story. There was no media, Facebook, or Twitter, and the Holy Spirit chose plain old common shepherds to tell the story of the birth. The Holy Spirit continues to rely on us common folks and only occasionally uses the powerful, beginning perhaps with the Roman Emperor Constantine in the early 300's AD. As was the case with Zechariah and then Mary, the angels played a starring role in their appearance to the shepherds.

Luke 2:8-14

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests."

HYMN

**"Hark the Herald Angels Sing"
Hark! The herald angels sing,
"Glory to the newborn King;
Peace on earth and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled!"
Joyful, all ye nations, rise,**

LSB 380

**Join the triumph of the skies;
With the angelic host proclaim,
"Christ is born in Bethlehem!"
Hark! The herald angels sing,
"Glory to the newborn King!"**

**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 the incarnate Deity!
Pleased as Man with man to dwell,
Jesus, our Immanuel!
Hark! The herald angels sing,
"Glory to the newborn King!"**

**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 man no more may die,
Born to raise the sons of earth,
Born to give them second birth.
Hark! The herald angels sing,
"Glory to the newborn King!"**

The Shepherds Respond

So who can just sit still after an appearance of angels? Mary couldn't; she visited with Elizabeth. The shepherds could not sit still either. They got up, went to Bethlehem to verify the story that they had been told, then praised God and spread

the story!

Luke 2:15-20

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about." So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

SPECIAL MUSIC

Hmong Ladies Choir

"Peb Cov Ntseeg Tswv Yexus"

Apostles' Creed (*stand*)

**I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth.**

**And in Jesus Christ, His 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 into hell.
The third day He rose again from the dead.
He ascended into heaven
and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.
From thence He will come to judge the living and the
dead.**

I believe in the Holy Spirit,

**the holy Christian Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life † everlasting. Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

Pastor: Remember us in Your kingdom, Lord, and teach us to pray:

**Cong: 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.**

HYMN "Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus" (Tune: Hyfrydol)
**Come, Thou long-expected Jesus,
Born to set Thy people free;
From our fears and sins release us;
Let us find our rest in Thee.
Israel's strength and consolation,
Hope of all the earth Thou art,
Dear desire of ev'ry nation,**

Joy of ev'ry longing heart.

Mary and Joseph take Jesus to the Temple

There was to be no rest for the weary. The trip from Bethlehem to Jerusalem was a few miles and there was no public transportation. But the temple visit was an event that was to be remembered.

Luke 2:21-24

On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise him, he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he had been conceived. When the time of their purification according to the Law of Moses had been completed, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord"), and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: "a pair of doves or two young pigeons."

HYMN "O Little Town of Bethlehem" LSB 361 (v. 1, 4)

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.

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 with us,
Our Lord Immanuel!**

The Story of Simeon

When does the Christmas story end? It doesn't end yet. In modern literature, the story of Simeon might be called a sidebar. It is the story of a promise being fulfilled and of Simeon's praises to God.

Luke 2:25-32

Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Christ. Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying, "Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel."

Simeon's Prophecies

Simeon was beside himself with the joy of the fulfilled promise. But it wasn't his joy that led to his blessing and to his own prophesy; after all, he was filled with the Holy Spirit. The sword which he mentions refers to the agony that Mary would bear.

Luke 2:33-36

The child's father and mother marveled at what was said about him. Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother, "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against,

so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.”

HYMN “The People That in Darkness Sat” LSB 412 (v. 3-5)

To us a Child of hope is born,
To us a Son is giv’n,
And on His shoulder ever rests
All pow’r in earth and heav’n,
All pow’r in earth and heav’n.

His name shall be the Prince of Peace,
The Everlasting Lord,
The Wonderful, the Counselor,
The God by all adored,
The God by all adored.

His righteous government and pow’r
Shall over all extend;
On judgment and on justice based,
His reign shall have no end,
His reign shall have no end.

The Story of Anna

Anna was a woman of God, a woman of faith. She knew who Jesus was when she first saw him in the temple, carried by Mary and Joseph.

Luke 2:37-38

There was also a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying. Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and

spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.

The lighting of the candles and dimming of the church lights are at this time. Please keep the lit candle upright as only the unlit candle should be tilted to be lit.

HYMN

“Silent Night”

LSB 363

The soloist will sing the German verse first; everyone is then invited to also sing the first verse in German, with guitar accompaniment. Then we will sing all three English verses.

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!

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,
Heav’nly 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 the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth,
Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth.**

The Christmas Story Ends

The story of the Wise Men is often told as a part of the Christmas story, but the Wise Men from the East visited Jesus and his family many months later. Some think their visit may have been up to 2 years later. I will leave the story of their visit for the Epiphany season. Jesus and his family lived happily ever after. Well, not really, but we do like stories to have happy endings. This story ultimately goes on to have the most profound ending in history, but the story about Jesus' birth ends here.

CLOSING PRAYER

Joy to the World! The Lord is Come!

Pastor: The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you. The Lord look upon you with favor ☩ and give you peace.

Cong: Amen.

Pastor: And now may the Peace of the Lord be with you.

Cong: Thanks be to God.

CLOSING HYMN "Joy to the World" LSB 387

**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.**

**Joy to the earth, the Savior reigns!
Let men their songs employ,
While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains
Repeat the sounding joy, Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat, repeat the sounding joy.**

**No more let sins and sorrows 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,**

**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.**

THE POSTLUDE

Organist

THOSE SERVING WITH MUSIC TONIGHT

Organist/Guitarist: David Slonski

Music Director: Jane Parsons

Hymn Leader: Jim Turpin

Trombonist: Andrew Vernava

Handbell Choir: Kerry Williams, Kori Hanson,

Nancy Jane Mazi, Elaine Gerhardt, Jan Turpin,

Margaret Hight, Jane Parsons, Laura Shaghoian

Hmong Ladies Choir (Director: Kaying Lee)

