

...a **Savior**
has been
born
to you;
he is
Christ
the **Lord.**

Luke 2:11, NIV

**Nativity of Our Lord - Christmas Eve
December 24, 2023**

FAITH LUTHERAN

An Evangelical Lutheran Church

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Pastor: *The Rev. Thomas A. Cassem*

Organist: *Helena Bradford*

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.

WE PREPARE

WORSHIP PREPARATION

We prepare ourselves for the beginning of our worship service.

PRELUDE

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

PROCLAMATION OF THE BIRTH OF CHRIST

This night,

- unknow ages for the time when God created the heavens and earth and then formed man and woman in his own image,
- several thousand years after the flood, when God made the rainbow shine forth as a sign of the covenant,
- twenty-one centuries from the time of Abraham and Sarah,
- thirteen centuries after Moses led the people of Israel out of Egypt,
- eleven hundred years from the time of Ruth and the Judges,
- one thousand years from the anointing of David as king;

in

- the sixty-fifth week according to the prophecy of Daniel,
- the one hundred and ninety-fourth Olympiad,
- the seven hundred and fifty-second year from the foundation of the city of Rome,
- the forty-second year of the reign of Octavian August,

the whole world being at peace,

Jesus Christ,

The eternal God and Son of the eternal Father, desiring to sanctify the world by his most merciful coming, being conceived by the Holy Spirit, and nine months having passed since his conception, was born in Bethlehem of Judea of the Virgin Mary.

This night is the nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ according to the flesh.

O, Come, All Ye Faithful



1 O come, all ye faith - ful, joy - ful and tri - um - phant! O
 2 The high - est, most ho - ly, light of light e - ter - nal,
 3 Sing, choirs of an - gels, sing in ex - ul - ta - tion,
 4 Yea, Lord, we greet thee, born this hap - py morn - ing;



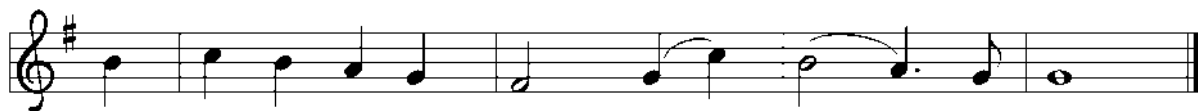
come ye, O come ye to Beth - le - hem;
 born of a vir - gin, a mor - tal he comes;
 sing, all ye cit - i - zens of heav - en a - bove!
 Je - sus, to thee be . . . glo - ry giv'n!



come and be - hold him, born the king of an - gels:
 Son of the Fa - ther now in flesh ap - pear - ing!
 Glo - ry to God . . . in . . . the . . . high - est:
 Word of the Fa - ther, now in flesh ap - pear - ing:

Refrain

Ve - ni - te a - do - re - mus, ve - ni - te a - do - re - mus,
 O come, let us a - dore him, O come, let us a - dore him,



ve - ni - te a - do - re - mus Do - mi - num.
 O come, let us a - dore him, Christ the Lord!

NATIVITY DIALOG

P Blessed is he who comes as king, who comes in the name of the Lord.

C Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth.

P I will hear what the Lord God has to say—

C a voice that speaks for peace.

P Peace for all people and for his friends

C and those who turn to him in their hearts.

P His help is near for those who fear him,

C and his glory will live in our land.

P Blessed is he who comes as a king, who comes in the name of the Lord.

C Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth.

THE NATIVITY PRAYER

P Let Us Pray.

C Almighty God, you have made yourself known in your Son, Jesus, redeemer of the world. We pray that his birth as a human child will set us free from the old slavery of our sin; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

LIGHTING THE ADVENT WREATH CANDLES

Light all four Advent candles.

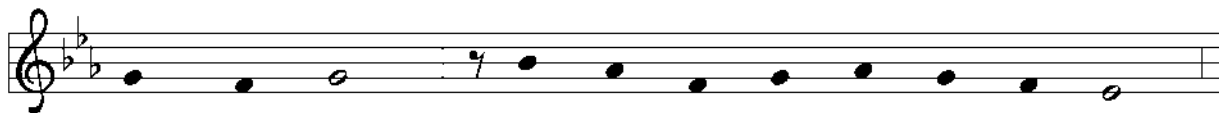
Hymn

ELW 245
(Stz. 1-5)

Creator of the Stars of Night



1 Cre - a - tor of the stars of night, your peo - ple's ev - er -
2 When this old world drew on toward night, you came; but not in
3 At your great name, O Je - sus, now all knees must bend, all
4 Come in your ho - ly might, we pray, re - deem us for e -
5 To God the Fa - ther, God the Son, and God the Spir - it,



last - ing light, O Christ, re - deem - er of us all,
splen - dor bright, not as a mon - arch, but the child
hearts must bow; all things on earth with one ac - cord,
ter - nal day; de - fend us while we dwell be - low
Three in One, praise, hon - or, might, and glo - ry be



we pray you hear us when we call.
of Mar - y, bless - ed moth - er mild.
like those in heav'n, shall call you Lord.
from all as - saults of our dread foe.
from age to age e - ter - nal - ly. A - men.

Text: Latin hymn, 9th cent.; tr. *Hymnal* 1940, alt.

Music: CONDITOR ALME SIDERUM, plainsong mode IV

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THE STORY OF THE NATIVITY

Isaiah 40:1-5, 11

The Ancient Prophecies of The Messiah's Coming

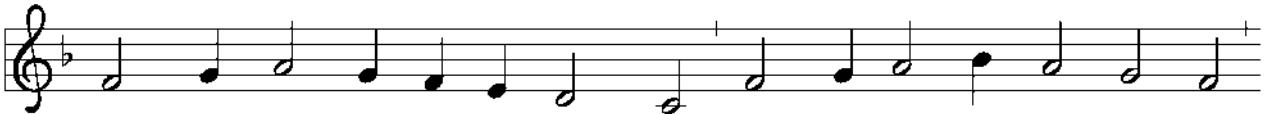
CAROL

ELW 256

Comfort, Comfort Now My People



1 "Com - fort, com-fort now my peo - ple; tell of peace!" So says our God.
2 For the her - ald's voice is cry - ing in the des - ert far and near,
3 Straight shall be what long was crook - ed, and the rough - er plac - es plain.



Com-fort those who sit in dark - ness mourn-ing un - der sor - row's load.
call - ing us to true re - pen - tance, since the reign of God is here.
Let your hearts be true and hum - ble, as be-fits God's ho - ly reign.



To God's peo - ple now pro-claim that God's par - don waits for them!
Oh, that warn - ing cry o - bey! Now pre - pare for God a way.
For the glo - ry of the Lord now on earth is shed a - broad,



Tell them that their war is o - ver; God will reign in peace for-ev - er.
Val - leys, rise to greet the Sav - ior; hills, bow down in hum-ble fa - vor.
and all flesh shall see the to - ken that God's word is nev - er bro - ken.

The Nativity of Our Lord

Luke 2:1-7

CAROL

O Little Town of Bethlehem

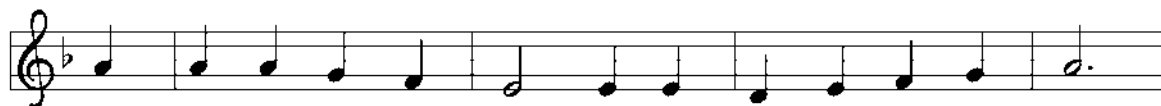
ELW 279



O lit - tle town of Beth - le - hem, how still we see thee lie!
For Christ is born of Mar - y, and, gath - ered all a - bove
How si - lent - ly, how si - lent - ly the won - drous gift is giv'n!
O ho - ly child of Beth - le - hem, de - scend to us, we pray;



A - bove thy deep and dream-less sleep the si - lent stars go by;
while mor - tals sleep, the an - gels keep their watch of won - d'ring love.
So God im - parts to hu - man hearts the bless - ings of his heav'n.
cast out our sin, and en - ter in, be born in us to - day,



yet in thy dark streets shin - eth the ev - er - last - ing light.
O morn - ing stars, to - geth - er pro - claim the ho - ly birth.
No ear may hear his com - ing; but, in this world of sin,
We hear the Christ - mas an - gels the great glad tid - ings tell;



The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee to - night.
and prais - es sing to God the king, and peace to all the earth!
where meek souls will re - ceive him, still the dear Christ en - ters in.
oh, come to us, a - bide with us, our Lord Im - man - u - el!

Hark! The Herald Angels Sing



1 Hark! The her - ald an - gels sing, "Glo - ry to the new - born king;
 2 Christ, by high - est heav'n a - dored, Christ, the ev - er - last - ing Lord,
 3 Hail the heav'n-born Prince of peace! Hail the Sun of righ - teous - ness!



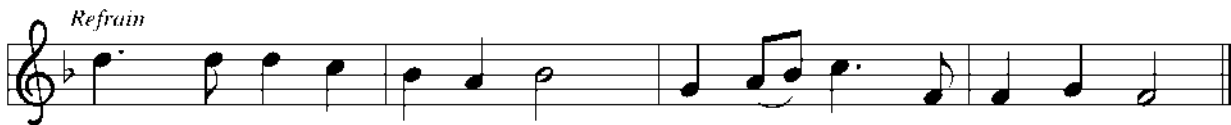
peace on earth, and mer - cy mild, God and sin - ners rec - on - ciled."
 late in time be - hold him come, off - spring of a vir - gin's womb.
 Light and life to all he brings, ris'n with heal - ing in his wings.



Joy - ful, all you na - tions, rise; join the tri - umph of the skies;
 Veiled in flesh the God-head see! Hail, in - car - nate de - i - ty!
 Mild he lays his glo - ry by, born that we no more may die.



with an - gel - ic hosts pro - claim, "Christ is born in Beth - le - hem!"
 Pleased as man with us to dwell, Je - sus, our Em - man - u - el!
 born to raise each child of earth, born to give us sec - ond birth.



Hark! The her - ald an - gels sing, "Glo - ry to the new-born king!"

It Came upon the Midnight Clear



1 It came up - on the mid - night clear, that glo - rious song of old,
 2 Still through the clo - ven skies they come with peace - ful wings un - furled,
 3 And you, be - neath life's crush - ing load, whose forms are bend - ing low,
 4 For lo! The days are has - t'ning on, by proph - ets seen of old,



from an - gels bend - ing near the earth to touch their harps of gold:
 and still their heav'n - ly mu - sic floats o'er all the wea - ry world.
 who toil a - long the climb - ing way with pain - ful steps and slow:
 when with the ev - er - cir - cling years shall come the time fore - told,



"Peace on the earth, good will to all, from heav'n's all - gra - cious king."
 A - bove its sad and low - ly plains they bend on hov - 'ring wing,
 look now, for glad and gold - en hours come swift - ly on the wing;
 when peace shall o - ver all the earth its an - cient splen - dors fling,



The world in sol - emn still - ness lay to hear the an - gels sing,
 and ev - er o'er its ba - bel sounds the bless - ed an - gels sing,
 oh, rest be - side the wea - ry road and hear the an - gels sing!
 and all the world give back the song which now the an - gels sing.

CHILDREN'S SERMON

All children are invited to come to the Altar steps for a special "Children's message".

HOMILY

Rev. Thomas A. Cassem

CHRISTMAS CAROL

ELW 275

Angels, from the Realms of Glory



- 1 An - gels, from the realms of glo - ry, wing your flight o'er all the earth;
- 2 Shep-herds, in the fields a - bid - ing, watch - ing o'er your flocks by night,
- 3 Sa - ges, leave your con - tem - pla - tions, bright - er vi - sions beam a - far;
- 4 All cre - a - tion, join in prais - ing God, the Fa - ther, Spir - it, Son,



once you sang cre - a - tion's sto - ry, now pro - claim Mes - si - ah's birth:
God with us is now re - sid - ing, yon - der shines the in - fant light.
seek the great de - sire of na - tions, you have seen his na - tal star.
ev - er - more your voic - es rais - ing to the • e - ter - nal Three in One.

Refrain



Come and wor - ship, come and wor - ship, wor - ship Christ, the new - born king.

Text: James Montgomery, 1771-1854, alt., sts. 1-3; *Salisbury Hymn Book*, 1857, st. 4

Music: REGENT SQUARE, Henry T. Smart, 1813-1879

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

L Trusting in God's good news of great joy for all people, we offer our prayers for ourselves, our neighbors, and the world God loves.

A brief silence.

L Glory to you, God, for the song of the angels, proclaiming to the world Christ's holy birth. Give your church a joyful song to sing, that we bring the good news of peace and salvation to all people. Hear us, O God.

C Your mercy is great.

L Glory to you, God, for the stars that shine in the depth of the night. Provoke awe in our hearts at the expansive mystery of the cosmos. Open us to find beauty in the clear darkness of night and in the first glimmers of dawn. Hear us, O God.

C Your mercy is great.

L Glory to you, God, for Mary's loving care. Lead us to tend to one another in time of need. Share the comfort of your presence with all people tonight who are alone or separated from loved ones due to estrangement, incarceration, or illness. Hear us, O God.

C Your mercy is great.

L Glory to you, God, for the faithfulness of the shepherds in their vocation. Grant rest to any who feel exhausted from their work during this season: retail and restaurant workers, church musicians, administrative staff, and clergy, organizers of charitable-giving events, and service workers doing essential tasks. Hear us, O God.

C Your mercy is great.

L We lift up to you all who are especially on our hearts silently or spoken. (*A Brief Silence for Petitions*) Hear us, O God.

C Your mercy is great.

L Glory to you, God, for the multitude of the heavenly host. We rejoice in the zeal of all your saints who have witnessed the appearing of your grace, and who reveal to us your salvation for all. Hear us, O God.

C Your mercy is great.

L Abide with us, O God of mercy, and receive our prayers according to your abundant grace.

SHARING OUR LORD'S PEACE

The minister and the assembly greet each other in the peace of the risen Christ.

P The peace of the Lord be with you all.

C **And also with you.**



John 14:27

In a Far-Off Place, Jesus Comes



1 In a far - off place, Je - sus comes to earth.
 2 For the poor in heart, Je - sus comes to earth.
 3 In our deep - est night, Je - sus comes to earth:



Sheep and cat - tle grace the site. As the
 Hum - ble shep - herds start the news. For each
 ra - diant star to light our way. Sum - mer's



an - gel songs be - gin, like the whis - per of the wind,
 home - less in - fant born, for the meek and those who mourn,
 heat or win - ter's chill, with a warm and lov - ing will,



na - ture's hope a - wakes a - gain; Je - sus comes.
 for the wear - y and the worn, Je - sus comes.
 to a world that needs him still, Je - sus comes.

Text: Mary Louise Bringle, b. 1953

Music: TENTH NIGHT, Sally Ann Morris, b. 1952

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OFFERING PRAYER

P Let us pray.

C **God of abundance, receive and bless these gifts we have offered. Join our hearts with the song of the angels and gather us at your table of celebration. Strengthen us to share with all the world the abundance of your grace upon grace, poured out in Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh. Amen.**

WE RECEIVE GOD'S GIFT **HOLY COMMUNION**

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

The Pastor leads us in the Words of Institution (Not Printed)

Please direct your attention to the altar.

LORD'S PRAYER

P Lord remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray.

C **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

P The Gifts of God for the People of God.

C **Thanks be to God.**

WE RECEIVE HOLY COMMUNION

Please be seated. All who celebrate with us the presence of the risen Christ in Holy Communion are invited to join us for this sacrament. We receive communion continuously at the communion station. Please remain seated until the ushers invite you to commune by pew. When you come forward, please return to your seat by the outside aisle. Children are invited for a blessing. If you would like to communion brought to you in your pew, please notify an usher.

CAROL DURING COMMUNION

ELW 278

Away in a Manger



1 A - way in a man - ger, no crib for his bed,
2 The cat - tle are low - ing; the ba - by a - wakes,
3 Be near me, Lord Je - sus; I ask you to stay



the lit - tle Lord Je - sus laid down his sweet head;
but lit - tle Lord Je - sus, no cry - ing he makes.
close by me for - ev - er and love me, I pray.



the stars in the bright sky looked down where he lay,
I love you, Lord Je - sus; look down from the sky
Bless all the dear chil - dren in your ten - der care



the lit - tle Lord Je - sus a - sleep on the hay.
and stay by my cra - dle till morn - ing is nigh.
and fit us for heav - en, to live with you there.

COMMUNION BLESSING

P May the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen and keep you in his grace.

C Amen.

THE LIGHTING OF THE CANDLES

HYMN

Silent Night, Holy Night! *Stille Nacht, Heilige Nacht!*

ELW 281



Stil - le Nacht, hei - li - ge Nacht! Al - les schläft,
1 Si - lent night, ho - ly night! All is calm,
2 Si - lent night, ho - ly night! Shep - herds quake
3 Si - lent night, ho - ly night! Son of God,



ein - sam wacht nur das trau - te, hoch - hei - li - ge Paar.
all is bright round yon vir - gin moth - er and child.
at the sight; glo - ries stream from heav - en a - far,
love's pure light ra - diant beams from your ho - ly face.



Hold - er Kna - be im lok - ki - gen Haar, schlaf in himm - li - scher
Ho - ly In - fant, so ten - der and mild, sleep in heav - en - ly
heav'n - ly hosts . . . sing, al - le - lu - ia! Christ, the Sav - ior, is
with the dawn of re - deem - ing grace, Je - sus, Lord, at your



Ruh, schlaf in himm - li - scher Ruh.
peace, sleep in heav - en - ly peace.
born! Christ, the Sav - ior, is born!
birth, Je - sus, Lord, at your birth.

WE ARE SENT

BENEDICTION

P 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.

C Amen

HYMN

Joy to the World

ELW 267



1 Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth re -
2 Joy to the earth, the Sav - ior reigns! Let all their
3 No more let sin and sor - row grow nor thorns in -
4 He rules the world with truth and grace and makes the



ceive her king; let ev - 'ry heart pre - pare him
songs em - ploy, while fields and floods, rocks, hills, and
fest the ground; he comes to make his bless - ings
na - tions prove the glo - ries of his righ - teous -



room and heav'n and na - ture sing, and heav'n and na - ture
plains re - peat the sound - ing joy, re - peat the sound - ing
flow far as the curse is found, far as the curse is
ness and won - ders of his love, and won - ders of his



sing, and heav'n, and heav'n and na - ture sing.
joy, re - peat, re - peat the sound - ing joy.
found, far as, far as the curse is found.
love, and won - ders, won - ders of his love.

POSTLUDE

DISMISSAL

P Christ is born! Go tell it on the mountain and everywhere.

C Thanks be to God.

Our Worship Ends + Our Service Begins

Statement of Purpose

As servants of Christ, we are called
to proclaim God's saving Word in a caring, nurturing way,
to spread God's love throughout our community, and
to provide opportunities for people to grow in Christ.



The Nativity of Our Lord — December 24, 2023

You Belong

Who belongs? That is an enduring question for people of faith, and the beloved story of Jesus' birth in Luke's gospel helps to give us an answer.

Of course, Mary and Joseph have a place at the Savior's side on the night of his birth. Yet despite her call to bear none other than the Son of God (Luke 1:35), Mary is subject to the whims of earthly power. In compliance with the emperor's order, the couple make the trek to Bethlehem to be counted. But the baby will not wait to be born, and the guesthouse is so crowded that they have to lay him in a manger. Not the ideal conditions for labor and delivery! Nonetheless, for these new parents, home is where they make it. Wherever Jesus lies, that is where Mary and Joseph belong.

And perhaps to the dismay of exhausted parents, the shepherds also belong in the presence of the Savior, the Messiah, the Lord, that first night. Noteworthy infants usually attract noteworthy visitors, but the messenger of God sends the birth announcement to lowly field hands instead. Jesus is born in the city of David not just to anyone, but *to them*; he is a sign of God's salvation not in the abstract, but *for them*. No wonder these marginal, mostly neglected members of the community glorify and praise God for all they hear and see (Luke 2:20).

The wonder of Christmas is that you belong in Jesus' company too. The baby in the feeding trough foreshadows the Lord at his table. And if the child in the manger is *for you*, then so is his life, given and poured out. Come, taste and see for yourself. Receive this good news of great joy, peace, and God's favor, then sing your praise to God in reply.

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