

# The Nativity of Our Lord

## Christmas

### December 25, 2022

Note: In preparation for this service, you may choose to use an Advent wreath. The Advent wreath has four candles around its circumference. Three of them are blue or purple. One is rose-colored. A white candle is in the middle of the wreath. On Christmas Eve and continuing for the entire Christmas season we light all the candles on the Advent wreath.

**O Come, All Ye Faithful** Lutheran Service Book 379, Lutheran Worship 41, The Lutheran Hymnal 102



1 O come, all ye faith - ful, Joy - ful and tri - um - phant! O  
2 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*



O come, let us a - dore Him, O come, let us a - dore Him,



O come, let us a - dore Him, Christ the Lord!

**L** In the name of the Father and the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

**C** Amen.

**L** Our help is in the name of the Lord,

**C** who made heaven and earth. (*Psalm 124:8*)

**L** Who can discern his errors? Forgive my hidden faults.

**C** Keep your servant also from willful sins; may they not rule over me. (*Psalm 19:12, 13*)

**L** If You, O Lord, kept a record of sins, O Lord who could stand?

**C** But with You there is forgiveness; therefore You are feared. (*Psalm 130:3–4*)

**L** Let us, confess before God that we have sinned in thought, word, and deed, and as His people let us take refuge in His infinite mercy seeking His grace for the sake of Christ, saying:

**C** God, be merciful to me, a sinner, forgive us our sins, and lead us to everlasting life. Amen. (*Luke 18:13*)

**L** Almighty God, merciful Father, in Your holy Church, You daily and richly forgive us our sins and grant us new life through Your Spirit. Be in our midst, enliven our faith, and graciously receive our prayer and praise; through Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

**C** Amen.

**Angels from the Realms of Glory** Lutheran Service Book 367, Lutheran Worship 50, The Lutheran Hymnal 136



1 An - gels from the realms of glo - ry, Wing your flight o'er  
2 Shep - herds in the field a - bid - ing, Watch - ing o'er your  
3 Sa - ges, leave your con - tem - pla - tions, Bright - er vi - sions  
4 Saints be - fore the al - tar bend - ing, Watch - ing long in  
5 All cre - a - tion, join in prais - ing God the Fa - ther,



all the earth; Ye who sang cre - a - tion's sto - ry,  
flocks by night, God with us is now re - sid - ing,  
beam a - far; Seek the great De - sire of na - tions,  
hope and fear, Sud - den - ly the Lord, de - scend - ing,  
Spir - it, Son, Ev - er - more your voic - es rais - ing



Now pro - claim Mes - si - ah's birth.  
Yon - der shines the In - fant Light.  
Ye have seen His na - tal star.  
In His tem - ple shall ap - pear.  
To the e - ter - nal Three in One.

*Refrain*

Come and wor - ship, come and wor - ship;  
Wor - ship Christ, the new - born King.

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## Kyrie

- |                    |                            |
|--------------------|----------------------------|
| <b>L</b> O Lord,   | <b>C</b> Have Mercy on us. |
| <b>L</b> O Christ, | <b>C</b> Have Mercy on us. |
| <b>L</b> O Lord,   | <b>C</b> Have Mercy on us. |

## Gloria in Excelsis:

**Angels We Have Heard on High** Lutheran Service Book 368, Lutheran Worship 55, The Lutheran Hymnal n/a

1 An - gels we have heard on high, Sweet - ly sing - ing o'er the plains,  
2 Shep - herds, why this ju - bi - lee? Why your joy - ous strains pro - long?  
3 Come to Beth - le - hem and see Him whose birth the an - gels sing;  
And the moun - tains in re - ply, Ech - o - ing their joy - ous strains.  
What the glad - some tid - ings be Which in - spire your heav'n - ly song?  
Come, a - dore on bend - ed knee Christ the Lord, the new - born King.  
*Refrain*  
Glo - ri - a  
in ex - cel - sis De - o. Glo - ri - a  
in ex - cel - sis De - o.

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## Collect of the Day

**L** Let us pray: Almighty God, grant that the birth of Your only-begotten Son in the flesh may set us free from the bondage of sin; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**C** Amen.

## Isaiah 52:7–10

<sup>7</sup>How beautiful upon the mountains  
are the feet of him who brings good news,  
who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness,  
who publishes salvation,  
who says to Zion, “Your God reigns.”

<sup>8</sup>The voice of your watchmen—they lift up their voice;  
together they sing for joy;  
for eye to eye they see  
the return of the LORD to Zion.

<sup>9</sup>Break forth together into singing,  
you waste places of Jerusalem,  
for the LORD has comforted his people;  
he has redeemed Jerusalem.

<sup>10</sup>The LORD has bared his holy arm  
before the eyes of all the nations  
and all the ends of the earth shall see  
the salvation of our God.

**L** This is the Word of the Lord.

**C** Thanks be to God.

## Gradual Isaiah 9:6; Psalm 98:1b

**L** To us a child is born, to us a son is given;

**C** and the government shall be upon his shoulder.

**L** And his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,

**C** Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

**L** Sing to the Lord a new song,

**C** for he has done marvelous things!

## Hebrews 1:1–6

<sup>1</sup>Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, <sup>2</sup>but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.

<sup>3</sup>He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,

<sup>4</sup>having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

<sup>5</sup>For to which of the angels did God ever say,

“You are my Son,

today I have begotten you”?

Or again,

“I will be to him a father,  
and he shall be to me a son”?

<sup>6</sup>And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world, he says,  
“Let all God’s angels worship him.”

**L** This is the Word of the Lord.

**C** Thanks be to God.

### Verse of the Day: John 1:14

**L** Alleluia, Alleluia, The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, Alleluia.

**C** Alleluia, Alleluia, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. Alleluia.

### John 1:1–18

**L** The Holy Gospel according to St. John, the 1<sup>st</sup> chapter.

**C** Glory to You, O Lord.

<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 were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. <sup>4</sup>In him was life, and the life was the light of men. <sup>5</sup>The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has 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 bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. <sup>8</sup>He was not the light, but came to bear witness about 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 was made through him, yet the world did not know him. <sup>11</sup>He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. <sup>12</sup>But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, <sup>13</sup>who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

<sup>14</sup>And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

<sup>15</sup>(John bore witness about him, and cried out, “This was he of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.’”) <sup>16</sup>And from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. <sup>17</sup>For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. <sup>18</sup>No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father’s side, he has made him known.

**L** This is the Gospel of the Lord.

**C** Praise to You, O Christ.

**C** 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.



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!



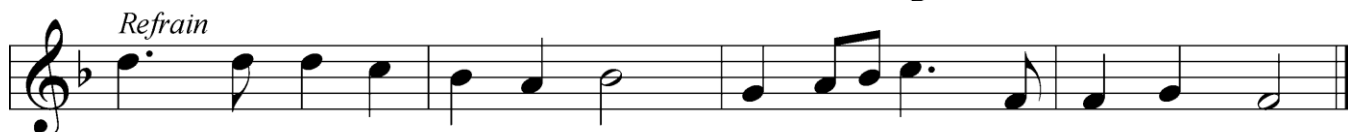
Peace on earth and mer - cy mild, God and sin - ners rec - on - ciled!"  
Late in time be - hold Him come, Off - spring of a vir - gin's womb.  
Light and life to all He brings, Ris'n with heal - ing in His wings.



Joy - ful, all ye na - tions, rise, Join the tri - umph of the skies;  
Veiled in flesh the God - head see, Hail the in - car - nate De - i - ty!  
Mild He lays His glo - ry by, Born that man no more may die,



With the an - gel - ic host pro - claim, "Christ is born in Beth - le - hem!"  
Pleased as Man with man to dwell, Je - sus, our Im - man - u - el!  
Born to raise the sons of earth, Born to give them sec - ond birth.



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

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### Devotional thoughts:

Ho, Ho, Ho. Merry Christmas!

Pause for a moment and consider this question: "What makes Christmas special?"

Is it Christmas cookies lovingly prepared with extra sprinkles?

Is it a prize turkey delivered to Bob Cratchit? Or is it a ham with an extra special glaze?

Is it the perfect Christmas tree meticulously decorated by the Leonardo da Vinci of your family?

Is it grandma's prize recipe for eggnog or pecan pie with a mountain of whipped cream?

Is it grand music streaming from every direction or is it the beaming smiles of children?

Is it finding the perfect gift under the tree or is it a hug from loved ones?

We could easily spend an hour listing things that make Christmas special. We all must agree that Christmas is an extraordinary event. Pagans, atheists, secularists, unbelievers, and non-Christians of every description cannot help but notice that Christmas is special.

Christmas is the time when we go the extra mile. We buy the exceptional gift. We celebrate to the point of exhaustion!

Why? How did this all begin?

Christmas began in darkness, the darkness of sin and death. Christmas began in a world without Christmas. There was no real joy in the world. Heaven and nature did not sing. It was a world dominated by Scrooges and Grinches, by scribes and Pharisees, by Herods and Caesars. Money changers filled the temple. False prophets came in sheep's clothing but inwardly were ravenous wolves. Hired hands fled and abandoned the flock. Thieves and robbers came to steal and kill and destroy.

But in this world of sin, the dear Christ enters in. John describes it this way, "The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world" (John 1:9). "In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it" (John 1:5-6).

Every Christmas candle, every Christmas star, every Christmas light testifies to this Light shining in the darkness. But unfortunately, not everyone receives His light. Many choose to remain in darkness. As St. Paul writes, they live "in the futility of their minds. They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart" (Ephesians 4:17-18).

But for us, children of Christmas, the world is quite different. The Bible describes us this way: "The people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light, and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death, on them a light has dawned" (Matthew 4:16).

Long ago, and far, far away, a beam of light from a miraculous star reached the eye of a wise man in the east gazing into the sky. Something special, wonderful, and amazing happened. This beam of light was God's signal that Christmas would change the world. Soon they mounted an expedition to find the new-born king. This was no ordinary king. No ordinary gifts would do. They must bring Him gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh. They must bow down and worship Him, the Light shining in the darkness.

The wise men discovered a baby who fulfilled the angel's promise to Mary. Her child was the Son of the Most High (Luke 1:32). The star led them to a boy named Jesus because He would save His people from their sins (Matthew 1:21). They bowed down and worshiped Immanuel, God with us (Matthew 1:23). They gave their gifts to the "Savior, who is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:11).

The light of that Christmas star has also touched you. It was not a light from a night sky. It was the light of God's word. His word is a lamp to your feet and a light to your path (Psalm 119:105). Through the gospel, the eyes of your hearts have been enlightened (Ephesians 1:18).

And what have your eyes seen? Have they seen "a miniature sleigh and eight tiny reindeer"? No, you have seen the Word made flesh. You "have seen His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

Why is Christmas special? It is special because God's only-begotten Son became one of us! He was born of the Virgin Mary.

This little child wrapped in swaddling clothes lying in a manger is God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God, begotten, not made being of the same substance of the Father by whom all things were made! This Babe lying in a manger is the Son of God who came down from heaven for us and our salvation!

He was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried. And the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures and ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of the Father. And He will come again with glory to judge both the living and the dead, whose kingdom will have no end.

This is why Christmas is special! Christmas is special because Jesus went the extra mile. Christmas is special because Jesus, God's only-begotten Son is an exceptional gift. Christmas is special because Jesus loved us to the point of exhaustion and death on the cross. Christmas is special because Jesus rose from the dead.

God no longer sends Christmas stars. Angels no longer proclaim the Savior's birth or sing "Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, goodwill toward men." But He still sends light into the world! "You are the light of the world!" (Matthew 5:14). "You are all children of light, children of the day!" (1 Thessalonians 5:5). You all have received Jesus. You believe in His name. You have become children of God. You were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. (John 1:12-13).

You make Christmas special when you tell again the Christmas story. You make Christmas special when you touch the people around you with the love of Christ. You make Christmas special when you go the extra mile to show compassion. You make Christmas special when you give the exceptional gift of forgiveness. You make Christmas special when you serve God and your neighbors to the point of exhaustion!

1 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.

2 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!

3 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.

4 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!

“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:4-7).

God's richest blessings to you in Christ.

**L** To us a child is born, to us a son is given; let us offer praise, thanks and prayers to God the Father of our Lord, Jesus Christ. Almighty God, we ask that all who celebrate the incarnation and acknowledge that their God reigns would lift up their voices and sing for joy, and would always be ready to tell others about the Word made flesh

**C** Amen.

**L** Almighty God, grant that a spirit of peace be given to the nations of the world so that conflicts cease and all see in the birth of Jesus the salvation of our God.

**C** Amen.

**L** Almighty God, grant that any who find themselves in want or need would receive the necessities for daily life. Grant that Your people who have received the gift of the Your only-begotten Son would be known for their generosity.

**C** Amen.

**L** Almighty God, in this time of national distress and distrust, give our leaders wisdom for the challenges ahead. Send Your holy angels to watch over all of our loved ones, especially those who live in distant places. Protect all who attend to our needs during this ongoing pandemic.

**C** Amen.

**C** I thank You, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have kept me this night from all harm and danger; and I pray that You would keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please You. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.



**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.

**L** Let us bless the Lord.

**C** Thanks be to God.

**L** The Lord bless us, defend us from all evil, and bring us to everlasting life.

**C** Amen.

**O Little Town of Bethlehem** Lutheran Service Book 361, Lutheran Worship 60, The Lutheran Hymnal 647



1 O lit - tle town of Beth - le - hem, How still we see thee lie!  
2 For Christ is born of Mar - y, And, gath - ered all a - bove  
3 How si - lent - ly, how si - lent - ly The won - drous gift is giv'n!  
4 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.  
O come to us, a - bide with us, Our Lord Im - man - u - el!

**Service Notes:**

One person may serve as Leader or this may be shared with a number of individuals.

Read one or more of the lessons. Hymns may be sung or read. Use as much or little of this service as you would like.

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# Enhancing Your Worship

## Meditating on God's Word and Works

I will meditate on your wondrous works. Psalm 119:27  
My eyes are awake through the night watches,  
That I may meditate on Your word. Psalm 119:148 NKJV

## The Nativity of Our Lord

### Christmas

### December 26 - 31, 2022

#### Introduction

Most modern forms of mediation turn a person inward. Biblical meditation turns a person outward toward what God has said and done especially what He has said and done through Jesus for our salvation.

Each Sunday has its own special theme directing us to meditate on God's word and actions. This theme is found in the Propers of the Day (the parts of the service that change week to week). From Advent through the Easter season these themes focus our attention on the life of Jesus from His birth to His death and resurrection. There is always much more in the propers than can be covered in any Sunday service. God willing, I will use the propers for Sunday to provide you with a devotion each day to help you meditate on what God has done for you.

#### Monday – The Second Day of Christmas

- L** In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.  
**C** Amen.

#### Introit Psalm 98:1–4;; antiphon Isaiah 9:6

- L** For to us a child is born, to us a son is given;  
and the government shall be upon his shoulder,  
**C** and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor,  
Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.  
**L** Oh sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvelous things!  
His right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him.  
**C** The Lord has made known his salvation;  
he has revealed his righteousness in the sight of the nations.  
**L** He has remembered his steadfast love and faithfulness to the house of Israel.  
All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.  
**C** Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth;  
break forth into joyous song and sing praises!  
**C** Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;  
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.  
**L** For to us a child is born, to us a son is given;  
and the government shall be upon his shoulder,  
**C** and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor,  
Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

## Verse John 1:14

- L** Alleluia, Alleluia. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, Alleluia.  
**C** Alleluia, Alleluia. And we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. Alleluia.

## Kyrie

- L** O Lord,           **C** Have Mercy on us.  
**L** O Christ,       **C** Have Mercy on us.  
**L** O Lord,           **C** Have Mercy on us.

George Frideric Handel was born in Halle, Germany in 1685 (the same year as Johann Sebastian Bach). After serving as a musician and composer in Germany, he eventually arrived in England in 1717. There, in 1742, he composed “Messiah.” It has been described as one of the best-known and most frequently performed choral works in Western music.

I first heard “Messiah” performed in the Chapel of the Holy Trinity at Concordia University in Ann Arbor while I attended there. (It was then known as Concordia Lutheran Junior College.) I remember the performance as the most remarkable experience. The musicianship and singing were incredible. As a result, to this day, I love hearing “Messiah,” although I have never again had the privilege of attending a live performance.

Possibly the most well-known song from “Messiah” is the “Hallelujah” chorus. However, the one I love the most is “For unto us a child is born.” I cannot read Isaiah 9:6 without hearing Handel’s music. So it was for me as I read the introit on Christmas.

I’ve heard pastors and church organists explain that they chose a difficult or unfamiliar hymn for its words, not the music. To this, I would like to offer this answer, “Poor and unsingable music can ruin good words.”

This is not the case with “For unto us a child is born” from “Messiah.” For me, it makes Isaiah’s prophecy one of the most memorable parts of Holy Scripture. It highlights important truths about the babe born in Bethlehem.

Not only is he the Wonderful Counselor, but He is also the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Baby Jesus is not only a human being, He is also God. He is one with the Father. He is the Prince of Peace who came to make peace between man and God. No wonder we sing when we celebrate His birth.

Here is a link to hear the Warsaw Philharmonic Orchestra and Choir perform “For unto us a child is born.”  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CHK8hJ2SPw>

- L** Let us pray. O Lord, thank You for the gift of the Child born to the virgin Mary who is for us the Prince of Peace. Amen.  
**C** Amen.

## Tuesday – The Third Day of Christmas

- L** In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.  
**C** Amen.

## Verse John 1:14

- L** Alleluia, Alleluia. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, Alleluia.  
**C** Alleluia, Alleluia. And we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. Alleluia.

## Kyrie

**L** O Lord,           **C** Have Mercy on us.  
**L** O Christ,       **C** Have Mercy on us.  
**L** O Lord,           **C** Have Mercy on us.

**L** Let us Pray: Almighty God, grant that the birth of Your only-begotten Son in the flesh may set us free from the bondage of sin; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.  
**C** Amen.

Wow. Christmas is over. Well, the hoopla is over but Christmas isn't. Christmas is always here because Jesus is always here with us!

God's only-begotten Son has entered the world in our human flesh. Humanity has changed. We live in the time of Christmas. We live in the time when we have been freed from the bondage of sin. Isaac Watts put it this way:

Joy to the world! the Lord is come;

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.

Did you know that "Joy to the World" is Isaac Watts' interpretation of Psalm 98 which is part of our introit for this week? He understood that the birth of Jesus is the reason to "Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth; break forth into joyous song and sing praises!" (Psalm 98:4).

We break forth into joyous song each and every day because Christ the Savior is born, our sins are forgiven, and heaven is our home.

Prayer: Almighty God, grant that the birth of Your only-begotten Son in the flesh may set us free from the bondage of sin; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

A footnote about "Joy to the World": The tune for "Joy to the World" was written by Lowell Mason in 1836 and our arrangement in 1842. Lowell Mason attributed the inspiration for his tune and arrangement to Handel's Messiah! Lowell Mason, as Superintendent of the Independent Presbyterian Church, is credited with organizing the first Sunday school for blacks in 1826 at First Bryan Baptist Church in Savannah, Georgia.

## Wednesday – Fourth Day of Christmas

**L** In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.  
**C** Amen.

## Verse John 1:14

**L** Alleluia, Alleluia. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, Alleluia.  
**C** Alleluia, Alleluia. And we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. Alleluia.

## Psalm 2

- L** <sup>1</sup>Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain?  
**C** <sup>2</sup>**The kings of the earth set themselves,  
and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against his anointed, saying,**  
**L** <sup>3</sup>“Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us.”  
**C** <sup>4</sup>**He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision.**  
**L** <sup>5</sup>Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury, saying,  
**C** <sup>6</sup>**“As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill.”**  
**L** <sup>7</sup>I will tell of the decree: The LORD said to me,  
“You are my Son; today I have begotten you.  
**C** <sup>8</sup>**Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession.**  
**L** <sup>9</sup>You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.”  
**C** <sup>10</sup>**Now therefore, O kings, be wise; be warned, O rulers of the earth.**  
**L** <sup>11</sup>Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling.  
**C** <sup>12</sup>**Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled.**  
**Blessèd are all who take refuge in him.**

## Kyrie

- |                    |                            |
|--------------------|----------------------------|
| <b>L</b> O Lord,   | <b>C</b> Have Mercy on us. |
| <b>L</b> O Christ, | <b>C</b> Have Mercy on us. |
| <b>L</b> O Lord,   | <b>C</b> Have Mercy on us. |

You may have noticed that Psalm 2 was chosen for our Christmas psalm because of verse 7, “I will tell of the decree: The Lord said to me, ‘You are my Son; today I have begotten you.’” God’s only-begotten Son has come into the world to be our Savior and King!

The ungodly nations may rage and plot against the people of God. But this is just a waste of time. God sits on His throne in heaven and laughs at their foolishness. God has set in motion His plan to win the ultimate victory over evil through His only-begotten Son.

Whenever you feel frustrated by the sinful world and its foolish schemes, read Psalm 2. Remember that God laughs at their silliness. He has already won the final victory for us through Jesus!

George Frideric Handel understood Psalm 2 this way. In Part 2 of Messiah, he uses Psalm 2 as a prelude to his famous Hallelujah chorus. The nations may rage but:

**Hallelujah! for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth.  
The Kingdom of this world is become the Kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ: and  
He shall reign for ever and ever.  
King of kings, Lord of lords.**

(Revelation 19:6; 11:15; 19:16)

Prayer: O Lord, thank You for sending Your only-begotten Son into the world to win for us the victory over all evil. Move our hearts to sing in faith, “Hallelujah! The Lord God Omnipotent reigneth! The Kingdom of this world has become the Kingdom of our Lord!” Amen.

## Thursday – Fifth Day of Christmas

- L** In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.  
**C** Amen.

## Verse John 1:14

- L** Alleluia, Alleluia. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, Alleluia.  
**C** Alleluia, Alleluia. And we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. Alleluia.

## Kyrie

- L** O Lord,           **C** Have Mercy on us.  
**L** O Christ,       **C** Have Mercy on us.  
**L** O Lord,           **C** Have Mercy on us.

## Isaiah 52:7–10

<sup>7</sup>How beautiful upon the mountains  
are the feet of him who brings good news,  
who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness,  
who publishes salvation,  
who says to Zion, “Your God reigns.”  
<sup>8</sup>The voice of your watchmen—they lift up their voice;  
together they sing for joy;  
for eye to eye they see  
the return of the LORD to Zion.  
<sup>9</sup>Break forth together into singing,  
you waste places of Jerusalem,  
for the LORD has comforted his people;  
he has redeemed Jerusalem.  
<sup>10</sup>The LORD has bared his holy arm  
before the eyes of all the nations  
and all the ends of the earth shall see  
the salvation of our God.

Continuing the Messiah theme, you may have noticed that Handel included Isaiah 52:7 as quoted by the Apostle Paul in Romans 10:15 in the King James Version, “How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!” It appears as Movement 38 in Part II. Handel knew that Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection must be proclaimed for people to believe and receive the blessings of salvation.

Talking about the “beautiful feet” of God’s messenger seems odd to our modern ears. However, throughout most of history, news was delivered by messengers who walked or ran to bring good news!

Isaiah tells us that his message is so wonderful that the messenger traveled over the mountains to bring the good news of happiness. What is the message that causes us to sing for joy? “Your God reigns!”

Salvation has come to us. Evil has been defeated. Sin does not rule our hearts. The Devil can only scowl at us. Death has been overcome in the victory of the resurrection.

Distress does not overwhelm us. We are comforted by the love and grace of God shown to us in His only-begotten Son!

Prayer: O Lord God, thank You for the Good News of the victory won for us by Jesus. Rule our hearts with joy and peace. Grant us the comfort of Your salvation. Let our singing be filled with joy! Amen.

## Friday – Sixth Day of Christmas

**L** In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.  
**C** Amen.

### Verse John 1:14

**L** Alleluia, Alleluia. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, Alleluia.  
**C** Alleluia, Alleluia. And we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. Alleluia.

### Kyrie

**L** O Lord,           **C** Have Mercy on us.  
**L** O Christ,       **C** Have Mercy on us.  
**L** O Lord,           **C** Have Mercy on us.

### Hebrews 1:1–6

<sup>1</sup>Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, <sup>2</sup>but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. <sup>3</sup>He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, <sup>4</sup>having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

<sup>5</sup>For to which of the angels did God ever say,  
“You are my Son,  
today I have begotten you”?

Or again,  
“I will be to him a father,  
and he shall be to me a son”?

<sup>6</sup>And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world, he says,  
“Let all God’s angels worship him.”

Our Epistle lesson for Christmas brings us to Handel’s Messiah Part II, Scene 4, Movements 34 and 35. A solo tenor sings these words from Hebrews 1:5 KJV, “Unto which of the angels said He at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten Thee?” This is followed by a joyful and festive chorus singing from verse 6, “Let all the angels of God worship Him.”

Christmas and Christianity are not about a better set of rules for living. It is not about following the principles of a great teacher or the example set by a noble man.

Christmas is about God’s only-begotten Son being born in Bethlehem to the Virgin Mary. The Baby lying in a manger is the creator of the world. He shares the glory of God and His complete nature. He upholds the universe by the word of His power!

But He humbled Himself to become one of us so He could take our place and suffer the punishment that our sins deserve. Now He sits at the right hand of God and the angels worship Him!

Jesus is God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God, begotten not made being of one substance with the Father! This is the Babe born in Bethlehem who came into the world to save His people from their sins! We join the angels in singing, “Glory to God in the highest! Peace on earth, goodwill toward men.”

Prayer: O Lord, thank You for sending Your only-begotten Son, Jesus to be our savior. Grant us faith to trust completely in Him for our salvation. Amen.



## Saturday – Seventh Day of Christmas – New Year’s Eve

- L** In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.  
**C** Amen.

### Gradual Isaiah 9:6; Psalm 98:1b

- L** To us a child is born, to us a son is given;  
**C** and the government shall be upon his shoulder.  
**L** And his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,  
**C** Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.  
**L** Sing to the Lord a new song,  
**C** for he has done marvelous things!

### Verse John 1:14

- L** Alleluia, Alleluia. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, Alleluia.  
**C** Alleluia, Alleluia. And we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. Alleluia.

### Kyrie

- |                    |                            |
|--------------------|----------------------------|
| <b>L</b> O Lord,   | <b>C</b> Have Mercy on us. |
| <b>L</b> O Christ, | <b>C</b> Have Mercy on us. |
| <b>L</b> O Lord,   | <b>C</b> Have Mercy on us. |

### Romans 8:31b–39

<sup>31</sup>What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? <sup>32</sup>He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? <sup>33</sup>Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. <sup>34</sup>Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. <sup>35</sup>Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? <sup>36</sup>As it is written,

“For your sake we are being killed all the day long;  
we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.”

<sup>37</sup>No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. <sup>38</sup>For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, <sup>39</sup>nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Our year ends as it began. We are celebrating that in Jesus “To us a child is born, to us a son is given.” Although His birth was ordinary in a little town and He was laid on a bed of straw in a manger, He is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. We sing to the Lord a new song of life and salvation because of His marvelous victory over sin and death.

How was your year? Did it bring any surprises? One thing that shouldn’t have been surprising to you is that God in Christ has been with you every step of the way. He has never left you nor forsaken you. We don’t know what the New Year will bring but He will continue to be with you in the days and months to come.

During my active ministry at Christ Lutheran Church, we ended the year with a communion service on New Year’s Eve. I always found that service to be one of the most meaningful. I noticed that the leadership of Christ Lutheran has decided not to offer New Year’s Eve service this year. Times change. Besides the Lord’s

Supper, one of the most stirring parts of the service for me was singing “O God, Our Help in Ages Past.” Take a moment to sing or read the words of this moving hymn.

**O God, Our Help in Ages Past** Lutheran Service Book 733, Lutheran Worship 180, The Lutheran Hymnal 123



1 O God, our help in a - ges past, Our hope for years to come,  
2 Un - der the shad - ow of Thy throne Thy saints have dwelt se - cure;  
3 Be - fore the hills in or - der stood Or earth re - ceived her frame,  
4 A thou - sand a - ges in Thy sight Are like an eve - ning gone,



Our shel - ter from the storm - y blast, And our e - ter - nal home:  
Suf - fi - cient is Thine arm a - lone, And our de - fense is sure.  
From ev - er - last - ing Thou art God, To end - less years the same.  
Short as the watch that ends the night Be - fore the ris - ing sun.

5 Time, like an ever-rolling stream,  
Soon bears us all away;  
We fly forgotten as a dream  
Dies at the op'ning day.

6 O God, our help in ages past,  
Our hope for years to come,  
Be Thou our guard while troubles last  
And our eternal home!

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Prayer: Eternal God, we commit to Your mercy and forgiveness the year now ending and commend to Your blessing and love the times yet to come. In the new year, abide among us with Your Holy Spirit that we may always trust in the saving name of our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

May you have a happy and blessed New Year.

Thank you for your words of encouragement that you have expressed to me throughout the year.

Note on “O God, Our Help in Ages Past”: This hymn also was written by Isaac Watts 1719. You may recall that Isaac Watts also wrote “Joy to the World.”

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