**All Saints Lutheran Church, ELCA**

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## Sunday, December 24, 2023

## Christmas Eve

*You are absolutely invited into this sacred space. We welcome all who are seeking God’s love and grace. All Saints recognizes that we are all unique and beloved children of God. We celebrate and give thanks for the many diverse gifts that God has given us. We affirm the sacredness of people of all sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions. We affirm the sacredness of all those who have experienced exclusion because of race, ability, age, or culture. We affirm the sacredness of all those who wrestle with addiction, physical or mental health, imprisonment, socio-economic circumstances, or anything that too often divides us. We believe that through our openness we all grow in our faith through Christ’s teaching to love one another as God loves us. We need each other and our sincere hope is by being in community together, we will experience God’s presence in new and real ways.*

*The offering plate is by the main door to the sanctuary for your convenience.*

*We practice open communion at All Saints Lutheran Church. What does that mean? It means that if you believe and trust that Christ offers his body and blood For You, you are welcome at the table. At All Saints, we believe that Christ invites all people to the feast. “Come to the banquet for all is now ready.”*

***\*\*Stand as you are comfortable***

***Prelude***

***Announcements***

**Lighting of Advent Wreath**

We gather together as God’s people, a people who have hope even when it seems all hope is lost. A people who believe that God is with us, even in the midst of a doubt-filled world. To believe that God is with us, no matter what, can sometimes feel like the most audacious thing in the world. It flies in the face of every message that the world sends. And yet…

*Light first, second, third, fourth, and Christ candle*

**We celebrate in the promise of your birth, and in its fulfillment! We sing your praises with the angels and the shepherds! With the angel Gabriel, we shout to the world that we have nothing to fear from your coming; this is the best news the world has ever heard!**

**Come, Jesus! We await the radical love and justice that you bring to all people and to all of creation.**

**Come, Jesus! Come!**

***\*\*Confession and Forgiveness (to the tune of “In the Bleak Midwinter”)***

The joy of Christmas finds us

Filling us with peace

Jesus’ birth reminds us

Of the truth we seek

We need to examine

Were we might have failed;

How does God call us to change

So Christ’s love can prevail?

**We confess before you**

**Jesus, Savior, friend**

**What we have not done**

**To usher in your reign.**

**We confess to doubting**

**Straying from the path**

**We let down our neighbors**

**Help us to turn back.**

Beloved ones of Jesus,

This I promise you:

God always forgives you

For what you say and do.

In the light of a bright star

The Spirit shines the way

Follow now your Savior

Where he leads today.

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| ***\*\*Entrance Hymn*** | **O Come, All Ye Faithful** |  |  **ELW #283** |

***\*\*Greeting***

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,

and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

**And also with you.**

***\*\*Kyrie (to the tune of Infant Holy, Infant Lowly)***

God be with us as we worship, as we lift our prayers to you;

**Christ be with us as we worship, as we lift our prayers to you;**

**We pray for peace / from above that / fills the world with / hope and wonder:**

**God, be with us now, we pray! Christ, be with us now we pray!**

***\*\*Glory to God (to the tune of “Angels, From the Realms of Glory”)***

**Glory be to God in heaven and to people here below.**

**We praise you for all your glory you have given us to know.**

**Come and worship, come and worship, worship Christ, the newborn king!**

**Jesus, you forgive all our sins with your holy, grace-filled love.**

**Our baptismal gifts will shape us ‘til we meet in heav’n above.**

**Come and worship, come and worship, worship Christ, the newborn king!**

**Holy Spirit, ever present, filling up our souls anew**

**Sending us to share the message, we have been empow’r’d by you.**

**Come and worship, come and worship, worship Christ, the newborn king!**

***\*\*Prayer of the Day***

**Emmanuel, God-With-Us, tonight we praise your name and give thanks for your coming into the world as we have been told. Help us to ponder your presence in our lives, so that we may recognize you when we see you. Amen.**

***Reading:*** **Psalm 108:1-4**

1My heart is ready, YHWH,

and I will sing, sing your praise,

with all my heart.

**2Awake, lyre and harp—**

**I will wake the dawn!**

3I will thank you, YHWH, among the peoples,

among the nations I will praise you,

**4for your love reaches to the heavens**

**and your truth to the skies.**

The Word of the Lord

**Thanks be to God**

***\*\*****Gospel Acclamation*

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*\*\*Announcement of the Gospel*

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

***\*\*Gospel:* Luke 2:1-20**

1In those days, Caesar Augustus published a decree ordering a census of the whole Roman world. 2This first census took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria. 3All the people were instructed to go back to the towns of their birth to register. 4And so Joseph went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to “the city of David”—Bethlehem, in Judea, because Joseph was of the house and lineage of David; 5he went to register with Mary, his espoused wife, who was pregnant. 6While they were there, the time came for her delivery. 7She gave birth to her firstborn, a son; she put him in a simple cloth wrapped like a receiving blanket, and laid him in a feeding trough for cattle, because there was no room for them at the inn. 8There were shepherds in the area living in the fields and keeping night watch by turns over their flock. 9The angel of God appeared to them, and the glory of God shone around them; they were very much afraid. 10The angel said to them, “You have nothing to fear! I come to proclaim good news to you—news of a great joy to be shared by the whole people. 11Today in David’s city, a savior—the Messiah—has been born to you. 12Let this be a sign to you: you’ll find an infant wrapped in a simple cloth, lying in a manger.” 13Suddenly, there was a multitude of the heavenly host with the angel, praising God and saying, 14“Glory to God in high heaven! And on earth, peace to those on whom God’s favor rests.” 15When the angels had returned to heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go straight to Bethlehem and see this event that God has made known to us.” 16They hurried and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger; 17once they saw this, they reported what they had been told concerning the child. 18All who heard about it were astonished at the report given by the shepherds. 19Mary treasured all these things and reflected on them in her heart. 20The shepherds went away glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, just as they had been told.

The Gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, O Christ.**

**Sermon “Returning to the Story”**

***Hymn of the Day* O Little Town of Bethlehem ELW#279**

**\*\*Affirmation of Faith**

**We affirm that God created the world of which we are a part and upon which we depend. God made us and all of Creation partners in the work of sustaining and continuing to create this world.**

**We affirm that the love of the Creator took flesh in Jesus the Christ. Jesus calls us from fear and self-centeredness to connection with God and each other. Jesus stayed true to God’s will, though it led to death on the cross. Rising and ascending, Jesus remains present in all times and places; accepting us where we are, as we are; calling us to new life; reminding us that we are more than flesh and that death is not the end.**

**We affirm that God gives us the gift of the Spirit, voice of conscience and discernment, source of strength and courage, comforter in times of hardship and pain. She calls us to the joy of being our true selves together in loving community.**

**We affirm that we depend on God: Creator, Christ, and Spirit; joining ourselves with God’s will, seeking to become more fully ourselves in service to each other and the world, living into the Kingdom in our midst. Amen.**

### *\*\*Prayers of Intercession*

**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.**

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.

**Your mercy is great.**

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.

**Your mercy is great.**

Glory to you, God, for the child born to us who establishes a kingdom of justice and righteousness. Break bonds of oppression, bring reconciliation to warring lands, and establish peace from this time onward and forevermore. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

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, especially Monty, David, Theresa, Paul, Linda and Bill, Dylan, Rob, Becky, Matt, Jim and Dee, and the people of Israel and Palestine. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

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.

**Your mercy is great.**

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

**Your mercy is great.**

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

**Amen.**

*\*\** ***Sharing of the Peace***

### *\*\*Offering is brought forward*

### *\*\** *Offertory Response*

### For the Beauty of the Earth ELW #879

### *\*\*Offertory Prayer*

**Almighty God, we give you thanks for all that you have given us. In return, we offer up these gifts to you: our skills, our time, and our money. Help us to be good stewards of all that you have given us. In the name of Jesus, our Savior. Amen.**

 **\*\**Dialogue (to the tune of “Good King Wenceslas”)***

May our God be with you now

**And be with you also**

Lift your song in praise to God

**We sing to God our praises**

**We give thanks and praise to God**

**Of past, present, and future;**

**To Jesus who comes to us**

**Cradled in a manger!**

***\*\*Preface:*** In the birth of a baby…as we sing with the angels:

***\*\*Sanctus (to the tune of “Good King Wenceslas”)***

**Holy one who comes to earth**

**Mighty one to save us**

**Heav’n and earth cannot contain**

**The gift you come to give us**

**Sing we now hosanna,**

**Hosanna in the highest!**

**Sing we now hosanna,**

**Hosanna in the highest!**

***\*\*Words of Institution***

**\*\*LORD’S PRAYER**

Our Loving God in heaven, hallowed be your Name,

Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial, and deliver us from evil.

For the dominion, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

***Invitation to Communion***

### *Communion Hymn* O Come, O Come EmmanuelELW #257

***\*\*Post-communion prayer (to the tune of “Good King Wenceslas”)***

**Our thanks we return to God**

**For blessing us from heaven**

**Jesus’ body and his blood**

**A gift so freely given**

**Now in thanks and praise we go**

**Out to tell the story**

**Of the one who came to earth**

**To reveal God’s glory!**

### *\*\*Candlelight Hymn* Silent Night ELW #281

### *\*\*Blessing (to the tune of “Of the Father’s Love Begotten”)*

### *\*\*Closing Hymn* Joy to the WorldELW#267

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### *\*\*Dismissal*

Go in peace. Share the good news!

**THANKS BE TO GOD!**

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**Calendar of Events**

***Wednesday, December 27 – Pastor Sarah working remotely***

***December 31-New Year's Eve***

***Sunday, January 1 – Worship 9:15***

**The office will be closed at least through New Year’s Day. Pastor Sarah will resume normal office hours the week after the New Year’s holiday. Please feel free to call the office and leave a message, or call Pastor Sarah directly at 402-890-5891.**

***Please note:***

* ***Adult Bible Study will be on a break and will resume after Christmas.***
* ***Creative Friends will be on break and will resume January 9, 2024***

***Bishop Candea reminds us that as followers of Christ, we are to pray for and support the most vulnerable among us. She pointed out that right now, the most vulnerable people in the world are the women, children, and elderly people living in the Gaza Strip.***

***If you feel called to do something to help, Lutheran World Relief is providing aid to civilians caught in the crisis in Israel and Palestine. You can donate directly at*** [***lwr.org/israel-gaza***](lwr.org/israel-gaza)***.***

***All members are welcome to attend regularly scheduled council meetings. Additionally, the Council would like to remind you that the most recent Council reports and minutes are available on the bulletin board in the narthex.***

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**BLUE SPRINGS COMMUNITY SERVICE LEAGUE** *is very appreciative of your continued support of your neighbor.*

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**Questions for Reflection and Discussion**

1. The shepherds are proof that you don’t have to be educated or be a biblical scholar to understand what’s going on when you encounter the living God. You are transformed by that encounter. Have you ever had a transformative experience like this? It doesn’t have to be an angel or a burning bush. God may come as a still, small voice, or even as a person who opens their mouth and prophecy comes ringing out of it, intended for you in that moment.
2. What are your beloved Christmas traditions? How do they help you connect with your life of faith? How have they been changed or adapted over the years to meet the changing needs in your family or group of friends?
3. One of the commentators in one of the podcasts that I like to listen to said that his wife’s favorite verse in the Bible is Luke 2:19: “Mary treasured all these things and reflected on them in her heart.” How do you treasure the glimpses and encounters with Jesus that you have had? Do you ponder them?
4. He goes on to say that the shepherds were able to recognize the messiah, because they had been told, as verse 20 tells us. We see because we have been told. We recognize Jesus because we have treasured and pondered when and how we have encountered Jesus in the past. How do you listen? How do you treasure and ponder?

***If you are looking for a concrete way to support the people of Ukraine, Lutheran Immigrant and Refugee Services has opportunities for directed prayer, advocacy, or financial support.***[***https://www.lirs.org/Ukraine-crisis***](https://www.lirs.org/ukraine-crisis)

**Reader**

***Christmas Eve Betsy Reese***

**Altar Guild**

***Christmas Eve Sara Meyers***

**Tech**

***Christmas Eve Gary & Zach Antes***

**Prayer Requests**

***Monty Health Concerns (May 15)***

*David Health Concerns (April 11)*

*Theresa Family Concerns (May 05)*

*Paul Health Concerns (May 31)*

*Linda and Bill Health Concerns (May 16)*

*Dylan Military Service (September 06)*

*Pastor Sarah Health Concerns (October 03)*

*Rob Health Concerns October 11)*

*Becky Health Concerns (October 23)*

*Matt Health Concerns (November 06)*

*Jim and Dee Personal & Health Concerns (November 14)*

***Please pray for the people of Israel and Palestine.***