

The Lutheran Church of the Covenant
“Reaching Out, Reflecting Christ, Renewing Lives”

Christ Was Born For You

The Nativity of Our Lord
December 24, 2021



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.



We welcome you to worship here at the Lutheran Church of the Covenant! Here are a few notes to make you feel more at home as we praise this God of new life together!

- Bulletins and Communion (wheat or gluten-free wafers, wine or grape juice options) as well as candles (for the end of the worship) are available to be picked up at the back of the sanctuary.
- Portions marked with * are when we invite you to stand as you are able to do so.
- We encourage you to participate throughout the worship by speaking the **bold** print and singing along with the hymns from the hymnal and other musical portions in the bulletin!
- There will not be a separate time for an offering, so a basket is placed in the back for those who wish to support our local ministry and the wider church.
- We will commune from our respective seats, where the presiding minister will invite you to open your respective cups with the Communion elements. We believe this meal is for everyone who wishes to partake, regardless of church affiliation or lack thereof. This tangible gift of God's love is meant for the world to enjoy!
- Following the recommendation of the Cuyahoga County Board of Health regarding COVID-19, we ask that you wear a mask for the duration of your time in the building.

Our Worship Leaders & Staff

Ministers	All People
Presiding Minister	The Rev. Bradley Ross
Organist	Robin Crawford
Lector	Harry Werner
Proclamation of the Birth of Christ	Stephen Dobush
Ushers	Emily & Katie Garberich
Parish Administrator	Jennifer Lasher-Dobush

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The Nativity of Our Lord

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.

Pre-Service Music

Crooked River Brass

*O Come, O Come, Emmanuel
Ding! Dong! Merrily on High
In the Bleak Midwinter
What Child Is This?
Catalonian Carol
Pat a Pan
I Saw Three Ships
We Three Kings*

Prelude

What Child is This? (ARR. FOSS)

Ann Droste, Flute

Welcome & Greetings

*Call to Worship

Jesus, the bright eternal star, shines light in the world.

By day and night, he shines for all to see.

Jesus was born amidst injustice and poverty

that the world may see the justice and richness of God.

God so loved the world that God sent the only Son,

so that all may have everlasting life.

Jesus is the light of the world.

Jesus is the light of our own lives.

So, sing to God a new song!

A song of hope, joy, and peace around the world!

*Gathering 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.**

Hymn of Praise *Hark! The Herald Angels Sing*

ELW #270

Prayer of the Day

Gracious God of heaven and earth,
you have thrown a lifeline to us in our humanity—
a beam of light that shines through the Messiah.
Though born in a manger, he is the firstborn of all creation.
Though crucified on a cross, he is the Lord of abundant life.
Fill us with the wonder and joy of his presence in the world
and in our hearts now and forever.

Amen!

Children's Time

First Lesson

Isaiah 9:2-7

This poem promises deliverance from Assyrian oppression, a hope based on the birth of a royal child with a name full of promise. While Judah's king will practice justice and righteousness, the real basis for faith lies in God's passion for the people: The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this!

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

³You have multiplied the nation,
you have increased its joy;
they rejoice before you
as with joy at the harvest,
as people exult when dividing plunder.

⁴For the yoke of their burden,
and the bar across their shoulders,
the rod of their oppressor,
you have broken as on the day of Midian.

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

⁶For a child has been born for us,
a son given to us;
authority rests upon his shoulders;
and he is named

Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

⁷His authority shall grow continually,
and there shall be endless peace
for the throne of David and his kingdom.
He will establish and uphold it
with justice and with righteousness
from this time onward and forevermore.
The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

Word of God, word of new life!

Thanks be to God!

Psalm

Psalm 96

(The bold verses are sung by the congregation using the tone below)



Antiphon: Let the heavens rejoice and the earth be glad. (Ps. 96:11)

¹Sing to the Lord a new song;
sing to the Lord, all the earth.

²**Sing to the Lord, bless the name of the Lord;**
proclaim God's salvation from day to day.

³Declare God's glory among the nations
and God's wonders among all peoples.

- ⁴**For great is the Lord and greatly | to be praised,
more to be feared | than all gods.** *Antiphon*
- ⁵As for all the gods of the nations, they | are but idols;
but you, O Lord, have | made the heavens.
- ⁶**Majesty and magnificence are | in your presence;
power and splendor are in your | sanctuary.**
- ⁷Ascribe to the Lord, you families | of the peoples,
ascribe to the Lord hon- | or and power.
- ⁸**Ascribe to the Lord the honor due the | holy name;
bring offerings and enter the courts | of the Lord.** *Antiphon*
- ⁹Worship the Lord in the beau- | ty of holiness;
tremble before the Lord, | all the earth.
- ¹⁰**Tell it out among the nations: “The | Lord is king!
The one who made the world so firm that it cannot be moved will judge the
peo- | ples with equity.”**
- ¹¹Let the heavens rejoice, and let the | earth be glad;
let the sea thunder and all that is in it; let the field be joyful and all that | is therein.
- ¹²**Then shall all the trees of the wood shout for joy at your com- | ing, O Lord,
for you come to | judge the earth.**
- ¹³You will judge the | world with righteousness
and the peoples | with your truth. *Antiphon*

Second Lesson

Titus 2:11-14

*The appearance of God’s grace in Jesus Christ brings salvation for all humanity.
Consequently, in the present we live wisely and justly while also anticipating the hope of
our Savior’s final appearance.*

¹¹The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all, ¹²training us to renounce
impiety and worldly passions, and in the present age to live lives that are self-controlled,
upright, and godly, ¹³while we wait for the blessed hope and the manifestation of the
glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. ¹⁴He it is who gave himself for us that he
might redeem us from all iniquity and purify for himself a people of his own who are
zealous for good deeds.

Word of God, word of new life!

Thanks be to God!

*Gospel Acclamation *Angels from the Realms of Glory* (Verses 1 & 2)

ELW #275

*Gospel

Luke 2:1-20

God's greatest gift comes as a baby in a manger. Angels announce the "good news of great joy" and proclaim God's blessing of peace.

The Gospel of the Nativity according to Luke, the 2nd chapter.

Glory to you, O Lord!

¹In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. ²This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³All went to their own towns to be registered. ⁴Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. ⁵He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. ⁶While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. ⁷And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

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

¹⁴"Glory to God in the highest heaven,

and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"

¹⁵When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." ¹⁶So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. ¹⁷When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; ¹⁸and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. ¹⁹But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. ²⁰The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

This is the holy Gospel of our newborn Savior!

Praise to you, O Christ!

Hymn of the Day *Joy to the World*

Text: Issac Watts (1674-1748)

- 1 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.
- 2 Joy to the earth, the Savior reigns!
Let all their songs employ,
while fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains
repeat the sounding joy,
repeat the sounding joy,
repeat, repeat the sounding joy.
- 3 No more let sin and sorrow grow
nor thorns infest the ground;
he comes to make his blessings flow
far as the curse is found,
far as the curse is found,
far as, far as the curse is found.
- 4 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.

*Nicene Creed

**We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.**

**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father;
through him all things were made.**

For us and for our salvation

**he came down from heaven,
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary
and became truly human.**

**For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.**

**On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the scriptures;**

**he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.**

**He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.**

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

**We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

*Prayers of Intercession

Joining our voices with the heavenly host and Christians throughout time and space, let us pray for the church, the world, and all in need.

A brief silence.

Your love proclaims that a Savior has been born to us! Inspire your whole church throughout the world, including our extended Covenant family, to proclaim the good news of Jesus' birth to all who seek hope and new life. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Your love whispers to a weary world that the time for rest and restoration has come. Maintain healthy cycles of wake and sleep for all creatures. Where pollution disrupts natural rhythms, encourage us to new practices. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Your love cries to a warring world that the time for peace is at hand. Direct those in power who make decisions on behalf of others, that they nurture and sustain all that is healthy, good, and leading to wholeness. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Your love sings through the wails of a newborn baby. Respond to all who cry out in pain, despair, or need this night. Bring comfort to those for whom separation, grief, or loss makes this Christmas season especially difficult. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Your love murmurs words of comfort to a newborn child and exhausted parents. Bless new and expectant parents or caregivers, especially those who are alone or afraid this night. Pour out your love upon families of every kind. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Your ever-present love is proclaimed through the faithful who came before us. We give you thanks for Mary, John the baptizer, Elizabeth his mother, Joseph the dreamer, and all who point toward your compassion. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Rejoicing in your Word made flesh among us, we commend these prayers to you, confident of your grace and love made known to us in Jesus Christ, our Savior.

Amen!

*Great Thanksgiving

The Lord be with you. And al - so with you.

Lift up your hearts. We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy,
that we should at all times and in all places
give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God,
through our Savior Jesus Christ.

In the wonder and mystery of the Word made flesh
you have opened the eyes of faith
to a new and radiant vision of your glory,
that, beholding the God made visible,
we may be drawn to love the God whom we cannot see.
And so, on this holy night,
with our siblings in Christ throughout the world,
we come to this meal of your unending grace:

**What Feast of Love (Verses 1 & 3)*



1 What feast of love is of - fered here, what ban-quet come from heav - en?
3 What wine of love is of - fered here, what crim-son drink from heav - en?



What food of ev - er - last-ing life, what gra - cious gift is giv - en?
What stream of ev - er - last-ing life, what pre - cious blood is giv - en?



This, this is Christ the king, the bread come down from heav - en.
This, this is Christ the king, the sweet - est wine of heav - en.



Oh, taste and see and sing! How sweet the man - na giv - en!

**Thanksgiving at the Table*

Holy God, Creator of all and Source of life,
at the birth of time
your word brought light into the world.

In the fullness of time,
you sent your Word, born of Mary,
to shine in our humanity,
making us your precious children forever.

In the night in which he was betrayed,
our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks;
broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:
Take and eat; this is my body, given for you.
Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks,
and gave it for all to drink, saying:
This cup is the new covenant in my blood,
shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin.
Do this for the remembrance of me.

Remembering, therefore,
his birth and life among us,
his death and resurrection,
we await his coming again
when all things will be restored to wholeness.

Holy Spirit, bless us and this bread and cup,
that, held and nourished by you,
we may live as disciples proclaiming hope and new life,
shining with the light of the Messiah.

Through him all glory and honor is yours,
Almighty Father, with the Holy Spirit,
both now and forever. **Amen!**

**Our Father 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 kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours,
now and forever. Amen.**

Communion

Music Interlude *Gesu Bambino* (ARR. MARLATT)

Crooked River Brass

*Prayer after Communion

Emmanuel, God with us,
you grace us with life and breath
and give us bread for the journey.
Send us out in service to this world that you love,
telling the amazing news of your coming
as Savior and Lord. **Amen!**

*Proclamation of the Birth of Christ

This contemporary version of an ancient proclamation places the birth of Christ into human history yet avoids a literalistic accounting of time. The last phrase makes it clear that the nativity of Jesus is not only then but now, today, in our own time.

*Candle-Lighting Interlude *In the Bleak Midwinter (arr. Lee)*

The ushers will bring their own candles, lit from the Christ candle, down the center aisle to help light the candles of all in the assembly. We ask the unlit candles be tipped towards the lit candles as we humbly fill the sanctuary with light of Christ.

*Candlelight Hymn *Silent Night, Holy Night*

ELW #281

*Blessing

Grace from God's own heart,
peace from the † Child in the manger,
and strength from the Spirit of life,
be blessings for you today and forever. **Amen!**

*Sending Hymn *Go Tell It on the Mountain*

ELW #290

*Dismissal

Christ is born! So, go in peace! Rejoice in our Savior!

Thanks be to God!

Postlude *The Joy of Christmas (SHACKLEY)*

Poinsettias

The altar poinsettias are given to the glory of the Lord. In addition, from:

- ❖ The Bernardos: in memory of Patrick, Olga and Nolan Bednardo, Jo Shelton, and Dante Fossa
- ❖ Ann Droste: in memory of John Klecan
- ❖ Donna Franz: in memory of Bob Franz, Oscar and Ruth Franz, and Wilber and Emma Niemann
- ❖ Joan and Mike Garvin: in memory of Lois and Paul Gerstenberger, Mildred and Clyde Garvin, Dennis Spuzzillo, and Larry Garberich, Sr.
- ❖ Paula & Alex Hohenstein: in memory of their parents, Bill and Emma Hohenstein and Carl and Martha Slanicka
- ❖ Nancy Langtry: in memory of James Flick and Lisa Hollingsworth
- ❖ Ted Lockmiller: in memory of Christine Lockmiller and Theodore E. Lockmiller, Sr.
- ❖ Marie Prendergast: in memory of Patrick & Louise Prendergast, Patricia Hanusz & Susan Prendergast, Chuck, Rosemary & Matt Merchant, Christine Russell and Stella Markham
- ❖ Madeline & Dick Ptak: in memory of Richard S., Mr. and Mrs. Ptak, Edward, and Mr. and Mrs. Gudely
- ❖ The Rusher family: in memory of Bernice Lambrecht, Don Rusher Sr., and James Rusher
- ❖ Claudia and Steve Senderak: in memory of Mom and Dad Kearns, Mom and Dad Senderak, Bob and Pat Skidmore, and Steve Sandor.
- ❖ Phyllis Treichel: in memory of Don Treichel and loved ones
- ❖ Marie and Bert Zahn: in memory of Wilma and Bert C. Zahn, Dorothy and William Parry, and loved ones
- ❖ Sheila Werner: in memory of Helen Brinkley.

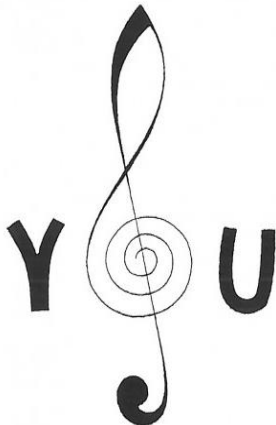
**VISIT OUR
WEBSITE**

For our latest video recordings of worship, bulletins, newsletters, as well as links to daily devotions and other resources, please visit:
covenantmaplehts.org.

Check us out on Facebook for the latest updates for community activities and a dose of Good News on your news feed!

facebook

THANK



We would like to extend our deep appreciation to the musicians who make this night all the more special!

Our organist: Robin Crawford
The Crooked River Brass:
Rich Lindemeyer - trumpet
Marcia Kline - trumpet
Debbie Haviland - horn
Donald Kaser - trombone
James McIntyre – tuba
Flutist: Ann Droste
Guitarist: Benjamin Al-Doory

The Cross is the True Gift of Christmas

I remember this jarring image: It was the Christmas Eve candlelight service at my home congregation. A banner depicting Mary and Jesus in the manger had been hung from the ceiling at the front of the nave completely obscuring the large suspended cross. I had seen that banner on Sunday mornings, but on this Christmas Eve in the semidarkness something else appeared. A spotlight that illumined the cross now shown on the banner with the effect of making the outline of the cross appear as the background of the Christmas scene.

The cross on Christmas? I didn't want the crucified Christ casting a shadow on the Christ child. Christmas is about angels and shepherds and the babe, lying in a manger, not betrayal and death. I didn't like it.

Christmas can be such a fraught season. It is forced to carry so much emotional freight. We must be merry. We must be filled with good cheer. We must be home surrounded by family. We must turn our lives into the happy endings of every TV Christmas special. There is a certain drivenness to get everything done, to get everything perfect by the stroke of midnight on Dec. 24.

Secular culture reflects this. *A Christmas Carol* and *How the Grinch Stole Christmas* are stories of redemption. The song "I'll Be Home for Christmas" and the film *Home Alone* are filled with wistful longing. I remember a *M*A*S*H* episode where the doctors in the operating room turned the clock back to 11:59 p.m. on the 24th so a young soldier's death wouldn't be recorded on Christmas.

But what are we longing for?

Certainly we want peace in our homes and in the world. We want love and a place to belong. We want life and the end of all the deadly things in the world that bring death and destruction. We want reconciliation. We want rest. We want hope. We want the assurance that all of this means something. We want to know that someone cares. And so we try to accomplish all of those things and squeeze it all into the weeks between Thanksgiving and Christmas Day. No wonder we can find ourselves exhausted and empty on Dec. 26. The mall scene the day after Christmas—returning broken toys and ill-

fitting or unwanted sweaters, the picked-over look of marked down Christmas decorations and wrapping paper—is the retail version of the reality of a broken world that doesn't know peace or love or hope. Except

The hope of Christmas is fulfilled on Good Friday. The cross is part of Christmas. “Nails, spear shall pierce him through, the cross be borne for me, for you; hail, hail the Word made flesh, the babe, the son of Mary” (*Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, 296). All of our Christmas glorias are realized in Jesus' glorification on the cross. We have peace. We have hope. We are loved. And not just at Christmas.

The cross is the Christmas gift. Through it God reconciles and heals. Through it God's love is made known and in God's love we are known and have our home. And it is a gift. We don't have to spend our energy and time hoping to attract the gift or the Giver by making everything right by Christmas. If we aren't physically at home, if our lives have not turned into the happy endings of TV Christmas specials, if we are estranged from family, if we are not merry, even if we should die, this gift of life has come to us.

Let's be gentle with ourselves and each other this...Christmas. Let's not fret about imperfect lives and incomplete holiday preparations. We won't ever get it completely right. That's God's work. It is the best gift exchange ever. Martin Luther wrote: “Is not this a beautiful, glorious exchange, by which Christ, who is wholly innocent and holy, not only takes upon himself another's sin, that is, my sin and guilt, but also clothes and adorns me, who am nothing but sin, with his own innocence and purity? And then besides dies the shameful death of the cross for my sake ... that I may live with him eternally” (*Luther's Works*, Vol. 51).



- The Rev. Elizabeth Eaton, Presiding Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)

This and other resources for the journey of faith available at LivingLutheran.org.

*From all of us at the Lutheran Church of the
Covenant,
we wish you and yours:*

Merry Christmas



The Birth of Jesus

And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn. Luke 2:7 (KJV)

The puzzle is based on Luke 2:1-20



J B E T H L E H E M N G I H K
 S A F P V T E N C D N Z B H H
 F H A T Y F S O N B B D Q B J
 A V E R E P D R K C A M G Z O
 S S A P N P V U R I B G Q D S
 E M D B H A E O I Z Y A K H E
 L B X I C E I C E N S U S L P
 S Q O H V V R B R O O M G R H
 I M U R A N R D B S W S A R K
 Y F E S N C A B S C H I L D R
 C M A S L V A X F T E I S E G
 A J H E S Q M E Z I Z L G K P
 Y T G K Z I T G S C M N W R Y
 A N G V W E A G J A A S R X G
 A Z H X Y W Y H M M R S F F C

SAVIOR	CENSUS	MARY	MANGER	BORN
CAESAR	SON	JOSEPH	MESSIAH	ROOM
CHILD	SHEPHERDS	ANGEL	BETHLEHEM	BABY