



Christmas Eve Candlelight Services

Union Lutheran Church

Glory to God in the Highest

Original Watercolor by Karen Morgan 2022

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OUR MISSION:

*Christ Centered ~ Mission Driven~ Traditionally-Grounded~
Congregationally Focused (Matthew 28:18-20)*

OUR VISION:

One Relationship at a Time

BE OUR GUEST

Can't wait to see what God can do!



SCAN ME



Union Lutheran Church

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Christmas Eve, December 24, 2023

4:00 p.m. & 7:40 p.m. Worship & Holy Communion

*(Please stand when indicated by *)*

Lutheran Book of Worship (LBW) green hymnal

With One Voice (WOV) blue hymnal

P=Pastor, C=Congregation

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The birth of Jesus, the Son of God, was a moment in time that changed humanity forever. Through this One, God came to dwell among us as Immanuel, to walk the paths that humans walk and to share in the human experience. This Jesus is fully human and yet no ordinary man; he is the priest foretold by the prophets, the Savior of the nations — love incarnate, sent to rescue us from sin, death, and the devil.

Prelude

Altar Candles and four advent candles are lit at this time.

Still, Still, Still (Ashdown)

Dawn Merrell

A Christmas Carillon

Belles & Beaus

The First Noel (Ashdown)

Dawn Merrell

GATHERING

Welcome & Announcements

Tonight we celebrate the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ. Our service is one of Scripture and Christmas Carols. The Word of God will be read throughout with selected Carols and Special Music pieces to help tell this story. As you join us in song and prayer, you will be participating in this wonder of proclaiming Jesus' birth, bringing real hope and eternal truth into our world.

* Invocation (Mathew 28:19)

Congregation please stand as able.

P In the name of the Father, and of the ✝ Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

C **Amen**

*Blessing of the Nativity Scene

P God of every nation and people, from the beginning of creation you have made manifest your love: when our need for our Savior was great you sent your Son to be born of the Virgin Mary. To our lives he brings joy and peace, justice, mercy and love.

C **Lord bless all who look upon this manger; may it remind us of the humble birth of Jesus, and raise our thoughts to him, who is God – with us and Savior of all, and who lives and reigns forever and ever. Amen**

* Brief Order of Confession and Forgiveness (John 20:19-23; 1 John 1:8-9)

P Jesus Christ, the Savior of the Nations, took on our human form in order to save humanity from sin, death, and the power of the devil. Let us take a few moments to examine our consciences, offering to our Lord a sincere confession of all our sins - known and unknown.

Silence is kept for reflection and meditation.

P Most merciful God,

C **We come before you this day with hearts full of regret and repentance. Forgive us, we pray, for all the ways in which we have neglected our neighbors, turned from those in need, and trusted in our own will rather than listening and obeying yours. Restore us to a right relationship with you, and give us a willingness to hear and follow your mandate to share the Good News of great joy with all the world.**

P For the grace of God has appeared in Jesus Christ, bringing salvation to all. Our great Savior and Lord gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous to do good deeds. In him we put our trust as we receive his promise of forgiveness. (Titus 2:11-14)

C **Amen.**

* Greeting (John 1:14, 2 Corinthians 13:14)

P The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Word who became flesh and dwelt among us; the love of the Father who created us in his own image; and the communion of the Holy Spirit, the giver of all good gifts, be with you all.

C **And also with you.**

Sanctuary lights are slightly turned down.

Congregation is invited to be seated.

THE OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECY

Hymn: *O Little Town of Bethlehem*

LBW# 41

- 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;
oh, come to us, abide with us, our Lord Immanuel!**

WORD

Scripture Reading

Please remain seated and engage by listening attentively.

But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days. (Micah 5:2 ESV)

⁶For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this. (Isaiah 9:6-7 ESV)

THE ANGELS VISIT MARY AND JOSEPH

Hymn: *Angels We Have Heard on High* (stanza 1)

LBW# 71

**1 Angels we have heard on high, sweetly singing o'er the plains,
and the mountains in reply, echoing their joyous strains.**

Refrain: **Gloria in excelsis Deo; gloria in excelsis Deo.**

Scripture Reading

Please remain seated and engage by listening attentively.

²⁶In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, ²⁷to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" ²⁹But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. ³²He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, ³³and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." ³⁴And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?" ³⁵And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God. ³⁶And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. ³⁷For nothing will be impossible with God." ³⁸And Mary said, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her. (Luke 1:26-38 ESV)

¹⁸Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. ²⁰But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a

dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” ²² All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: ²³ “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel” (which means, God with us). ^{24a} When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him. Matthew 1:18-24a ESV)

Instrumental: *Away in a Manger*

Beginner Bells and Dawn Merrell

The Sunday School Children and Youth will gather on the steps and sing Away in a Manger.

Children’s Message

Following the message the children return to their parents and guardians as the Beginner Bells ring.

Instrumental: *What Child Is This?*

Beginner Bells and Dawn Merrell

THE BIRTH OF JESUS

* Scripture Reading

Congregation please stand as able.

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. ² This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³ And all went to be registered, each to his own town. ⁴ And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, ⁵ to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. ⁶ And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. ⁷ And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. (Luke 2:1-7 ESV)

Congregation please be seated.

Sermon

Pastor Heidi Punt

Congregation please remain seated.

Hymn: *The Hills Are Bare at Bethlehem* (stanzas 1 & 3)

LBW# 61

- 1 The hills are bare at Bethlehem, No future for the world they show;
Yet here new life begins to grow, From earth’s old dust a greenwood stem.**
- 3 The heart is tired at Bethlehem, No human dream unbroken stands;
Yet here God comes to mortal hands, And hope renewed cries out: “Amen!”**

THE ANGELS AND SHEPHERD’S RESPONSE

Scripture Reading

Please remain seated and engage by listening attentively.

¹⁵ When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.” ¹⁶ And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. ¹⁷ And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. ¹⁸ And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. ¹⁹ But Mary treasured up

all these things, pondering them in her heart. ²⁰ And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them. (Luke 2:15-20 ESV)

Congregation please stand as able.

* Nicene Creed (Romans 10:9-10)

LBW p. 84

P As the shepherds and angels responded we also get to respond by confessing our faith.

C **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;

by the power of the Holy Spirit

he became incarnate from the virgin Mary, and was made man.

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.

With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified.

He 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

**Or, We believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church.*

* Prayers of the Church (1 Timothy 2:1-4)

LBW p. 85

P Let us pray for the whole people of God in Christ Jesus, and for all people according to their needs.

Wonderful Counselor, as your church gathers on this holy night, increase our joy in your Son come among us so that your saving Word may ring out in our songs, our words and our lives. *Lord in your mercy ... **hear our prayer.***

Mighty God, through your Son's humble birth the yoke of sin that weighs us down has been broken. Bring comfort, consolation, and strength to those who carry heavy burdens of grief, illness, fear, or pain. [We pray particularly for ...] By the light of Christ pierce the darkness that enshrouds them so that they might know that surpassing peace that comes only from you. *Lord in your mercy ... **hear our prayer.***

Everlasting Father, you made your home among us and call us your own children. Be present with those families who cannot gather physically together to celebrate the joy of your Son's birth. Let their love span the distance between them just as your love for us spans time and place. *Lord in your mercy ... **hear our prayer.***

Prince of Peace, may the world know your peace in the depths of every human heart. Grant a respite in the violence that plagues the land of your Son's birth. Quell the doubts and fears in every restless human heart. *Lord in your mercy ... **hear our prayer.***

The prayers conclude:

P Into your hands, O Lord, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your mercy; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

* Sharing of the Peace (2 Thessalonians 3:16)

LBW p. 86

P The peace of the Lord be with you always.

C **And also with you.**

Congregation please be seated.

Offering

The Offering is received as the Lord's Table is prepared. All loose offering will go towards SMI Haiti to assist in rebuilding a security wall around the Mission House. During the month of December, the Benevolence Teaching Moment is on Food for the Poor. Please prayerfully consider giving to the Benevolence Fund.

Anthem: *Carol of the Manger* (Wilson)

Chancel Choir

MEAL

Congregation please stand as able.

* Offertory Hymn: *The First Noel* (stanza 5)

LBW# 56

5 **Then entered in those wise men three, full rev'rently upon their knee,
and offered there in his presence their gold, and myrrh, and frankincense.**

Refrain: **Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel! Born is the King of Israel.**

* Offertory Prayer (Psalm 96:7-8; Psalm 100:4)

P Holy God, we give you thanks for all that we have: ourselves, our time and our treasures, all that first belonged to you and has been gifted to us, your children. Accept our offerings as a sign of our devotion to you, and make us truly grateful for the many gifts we have received. In Jesus' holy name we pray.

C **Amen.**

* Great Thanksgiving (2 Timothy 4:22; Colossians 3:1; Psalm 136)

LBW p. 88

P The Lord be with you.

C **And also with you.**

P Lift up your hearts.

C **We lift them to the Lord.**

P Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

C **It is right to give him thanks and praise.**

P It is indeed right and salutary . . . (*Here the minister continues with the preface appropriate to the day or season, concluding:*) we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

* Sanctus (Isaiah 6:3; Matthew 21:9): *Angels, from the Realms of Glory* (stanza 4)

LBW# 50

**4 All creation, join in praising God, the Father, Spirit, Son,
evermore your voices raising to the eternal Three in One.**

Come and worship, come and worship, worship Christ, the newborn king.

* Words of Institution (Matthew 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-24; Luke 22:19-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26)

P Blessed are you, Lord of heaven and earth.

In mercy for our fallen world you gave your only Son,
that all those who believe in him
should not perish, but have eternal life.

We give thanks to you
for the salvation you have prepared for us through Jesus Christ.

Send now your Holy Spirit into our hearts,
that we may receive our Lord with a living faith
as he comes to us in his holy supper.

C **Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.**

P 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.

C **Amen**

* Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13; Luke 11:1-4)

LBW p. 91

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**

Congregation please be seated.

Distribution of Communion (Mark 14:23)

All are welcome to receive the Lord's Body and Blood who are baptized and believe that Jesus Christ, crucified and risen, is truly present in, with and under the form of bread and wine for the forgiveness of sins, life and salvation. All who do not commune are invited to come forward to receive a blessing. Gluten Free wafers and grape juice are also available upon request. Please fill out the communion card in the pew and hand to the Usher while following their directions to receive Holy Communion or a blessing.

Communion Hymn: *Let Our Gladness Have No End* (stanzas 1 & 3)

LBW# 57

**1 Let our gladness have no end, Hallelujah!
For to earth did Christ descend. Hallelujah! (Refrain)**

**Refrain: On this day God gave us Christ, his Son, to save us;
Christ, his Son, to save us.**

**3 Into flesh is made the Word. Hallelujah!
He, our refuge and our Lord. Hallelujah! (Refrain)**

Communion Hymn: *Once in Royal David's City* (stanzas 1 & 4)

WOV# 643

**1 Once in royal David's city stood a lowly cattle shed,
Where a mother laid her baby in a manger for his bed:
Mary was that mother mild, Jesus Christ, her little child.**

**4 Not in that poor lowly stable, with the oxen standing by,
We shall see him; but in heaven, set at God's right hand on high;
There his children gather 'round, bright like stars, with glory crowned.**

Please stand as you are able.

* Blessing (2 Thessalonians 2:16-17)

LBW p. 92

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

C Amen

* Post-Communion Canticle (Luke 2:29-32): *Good Christian Friends, Rejoice* (stanza 3)

LBW# 55

**3 Good Christian friends, rejoice with heart and soul and voice;
now ye need not fear the grave; Jesus Christ was born to save!
Calls you one and calls you all to gain the everlasting hall.
Christ was born to save! Christ was born to save!**

* Post-Communion Prayer

P We give you thanks, O God, that you have fed us with Christ's precious body and blood, forgiven us through this Sacrament, and given us a new beginning. Send us now into the world you love, to share Christ's sacrificial love with all we meet.

C **Amen.**

* Blessing

P Great are the works of the Lord. Full of honor and majesty is his work, and his righteousness endures forever. Now may you be blessed in the name of God Most High: Father, Son, and
✠ Holy Spirit. (Psalm 111)

C **Amen.**

Sanctuary lights are turned down completely.

Introduction: *Silent Night*

Beginner Bells and Dawn Merrell

Prior to singing Silent Night the Beginner Bells will play an introduction as the individual candles are lit. The congregation is invited to join in singing the hymn after the completion of the introduction.

* Lighting of the Candles (John 1:1-5; John 8:12; John 12:44-46)

The minister lights her candle from the Christ Candle, which symbolizes Christ, the Light of the world (Jesus Christ) of whom John's gospel speaks. Please only tilt the unlit candle towards the flame of a lit candle which is held straight up and down. Once your candle is aglow with the flame, then keep it upright at all times. Resist the impulse to tilt your candle to light the next person's candle. The person next to you will then tilt their unlit candle to your candle. Use caution and avoid hair, clothing, and other flammables. Also use caution with the hot melted wax. Parents, or other adults, please assist small children.

* Hymn: *Silent Night, Holy Night! (Stille Nacht, heilige Nacht)*

LBW# 65

- 1 **Silent night, holy night! All is calm, all is bright
round yon virgin mother and child. Holy Infant, so tender and mild,
sleep in heavenly peace, sleep in heavenly peace.**
- 2 **Silent night, holy night! Shepherds quake at the sight;
glories stream from heaven afar, heav'nly hosts sing, alleluia!
Christ, the Savior, is born! Christ, the Savior, is born!**
- 3 **Silent night, holy night! Son of God, love's pure light
radiant beams from your holy face, with the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at your birth, Jesus, Lord, at your birth.**

THE STORY OF ANNA

* Scripture Reading

³⁷ and then as a widow until she was eighty-four. She did not depart from the temple, worshipping with fasting and prayer night and day. ³⁸ And coming up at that very hour she began to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem. (Luke 2:37-38 ESV)

Carefully extinguish your candle and give a few minutes for the wax to harden before you depart the Sanctuary.

SENDING

* Dismissal (Matthew 28:19-20)

P You have been nurtured in Word and Sacrament and heard
C **that Jesus Christ is born!**

P Union Lutheran Church you are sent in peace
C **to share the Good News.**

*Blessings as you carry the light of Christ with you
as you leave tonight. Safe travel home and Merry Christmas!*

Those Serving in Today

Acolytes: Noah Trexler & Sam Nguyen

Readers: Pete Nguyen & Ellie Wilhelm

Communion Assistants: Janice Goodman, Tara & Don Davis

Ushers: Phil Cauble, Larry Barringer, Tara Davis & Micah Nguyen

Offering Counters: Jennifer Curlee, Ali Davis & Doris Shepherd

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Poinsettias Given to the Glory of God

Listed in alphabetical order according to giver

In Honor of:

Karen and Larry Barringer
Sharon and Sonya Leazer
Adam Thompson
Derrick, Dalton and Wyatt Thompson
Wade and Ruby Leazer
Sonya Leazer
Karen and Larry Barringer
Derrick, Wyatt, Dalton, and Adam Thompson
Nancy Mulkey
Janet and Vernon Overcash
Support Staff and Volunteers
My Children and Grandchildren

In Memory of:

Pauline Leazer
John and Mae Oddie
John Oddie, Jr.
Pauline Oddie
Brady Leazer
Pauline Leazer
Carrie and John Oddie, Sr.
John Oddie, Jr.
Pauline Oddie
Elaine Honbarrier
Rev. and Mrs. VA Frick
Mr. and Mrs. Allen Merrell
Franz Merrell
Charles Huffman
Cecil Mulkey

Given by:

Ruby Leazer
Ruby Leazer
Ruby Leazer
Ruby Leazer
Sharon Leazer
Sharon Leazer
Sharon Leazer
Sharon Leazer
Thad and Sonya Mulkey
Thad and Sonya Mulkey
Pastor Heidi Punt
Debbie Rinehart

Given by:

Ruby Leazer
Ruby Leazer
Ruby Leazer
Ruby Leazer
Sharon Leazer
Sharon Leazer
Sharon Leazer
Sharon Leazer
Sharon Leazer
Frank and Dawn Merrell
Frank and Dawn Merrell
Frank and Dawn Merrell
Frank and Dawn Merrell
Thad and Sonya Mulkey
Thad and Sonya Mulkey