

# THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD CHRISTMAS EVE

December 24<sup>th</sup>, 2020 – 7 pm



**AS WE GATHER:** Most of us have heard the old carol “O Holy Night,” but sometimes we forget that none of us makes this night holy. The Lord makes this night holy, and He needs no help from us. What He does ask of us is that we listen to the familiar story, that we believe its truth and promise, and that we live in reflection of what God has done to save us. We cannot make this night holy, but we can keep it holy with faith that kneels at the manger, heads bowed in prayer and adoration, and voices raised in a joyful song of thanksgiving and praise.

## ✦ SERVICE OF LESSONS AND CAROLS ✦

**HYMN**      “Gentle Mary Laid Her Child”      #374 v.1, 2

- 1      Gentle Mary laid her child  
        Lowly in a manger;  
        There He lay, the Undeiled,  
        To the world a stranger.  
        Such a babe in such a place,  
        Can He be the Savior?  
        Ask the saved of all the race  
        Who have found His favor.
  
- 2      Angels sang about His birth,  
        Wise Men sought and found Him;  
        Heaven’s star shone brightly forth  
        Glory all around Him.

Shepherds saw the wondrous sight,  
Heard the angels singing;  
All the plains were lit that night,  
All the hills were ringing.

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## INVOCATION

**Pastor:** In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son  
and of the Holy Spirit.

**People:** **Amen.**

## LIGHTING THE CHRIST CANDLE

**Pastor:** Jesus Christ is the Light of the world,

**People:** **the light no darkness can overcome.**

**Pastor:** Let Your light scatter the darkness

**People:** **and illumine Your Church.**

## HYMN VERSE “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel” #357 v. 7

O come, Desire of nations, bind  
In one the hearts of all mankind;  
Bid Thou our sad divisions cease,  
And be Thyself our King of Peace.

Ref. Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel  
Shall come to thee, O Israel!

## CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

**Pastor:** Merciful Father,

**People:** **We confess that we have sinned against You  
and against one another. We have done the evil  
You forbid and have not done the good You**

**desire. We do sincerely repent of our sins and ask Your mercy for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Lord, to grant us forgiveness. Give us the will and desire to amend our sinful lives by the power of Your Holy Spirit, that we come to delight in Your will and walk in Your ways to the glory of Your holy name. Amen.**

**Pastor:** Upon this your confession, I, by virtue of my office, as a called and ordained servant of the Word, announce the grace of God unto all of you, and in the stead and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ, I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

**People: Amen.**

## **SALUTATION**

**Pastor:** The Lord be with you.

**People: And also with you.**

## **COLLECT**

**Pastor:** Let us pray. O God, You make us glad with the yearly remembrance of the birth of Your only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ. Grant that as we joyfully receive the Word made flesh as our Redeemer, we may one day with sure confidence behold the Son of Righteousness; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**People: Amen.**

## **THE PROCLAMATION**

*John 1:1-5; Isaiah 40:9*

Pastor: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made. 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. Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good news; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good news; lift it up, fear not; say to the cities of Judah, "Behold your God!"

**HYMN** "Angels from the Realms of Glory" #367 v. 1, 5

- 1 Angels from the realms of glory,  
Wing your flight o'er all the earth;  
Ye who sang creation's story,  
Now proclaim Messiah's birth. Refrain
- ref Come and worship, come and worship;  
Worship Christ, the newborn King.
- 5 All creation, join in praising  
God the Father, Spirit, Son,  
Evermore your voices raising  
To the\_ternal Three in One. Refrain

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**FIRST READING** *Luke 1:5–13, 16, 59–79*  
(Zechariah and Elizabeth)

<sup>5</sup>In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, of the division of Abijah. And he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. <sup>6</sup>And they were both righteous before God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord. <sup>7</sup>But they had no child,

because Elizabeth was barren, and both were advanced in years. <sup>8</sup>Now while he was serving as priest before God when his division was on duty, <sup>9</sup>according to the custom of the priesthood, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense. <sup>10</sup>And the whole multitude of the people were praying outside at the hour of incense. <sup>11</sup>And there appeared to him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. <sup>12</sup>And Zechariah was troubled when he saw him, and fear fell upon him. <sup>13</sup>But the angel said to him, “Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John.

<sup>16</sup>And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. <sup>59</sup>And on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child. And they would have called him Zechariah after his father, <sup>60</sup>but his mother answered, “No; he shall be called John.” <sup>61</sup>And they said to her, “None of your relatives is called by this name.” <sup>62</sup>And they made signs to his father, inquiring what he wanted him to be called. <sup>63</sup>And he asked for a writing tablet and wrote, “His name is John.” And they all wondered. <sup>64</sup>And immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he spoke, blessing God. <sup>65</sup>And fear came on all their neighbors. And all these things were talked about through all the hill country of Judea, <sup>66</sup>and all who heard them laid them up in their hearts, saying, “What then will this child be?” For the hand of the Lord was with him.

<sup>67</sup>And his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied, saying, <sup>68</sup>“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people <sup>69</sup>and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David, <sup>70</sup>as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old, <sup>71</sup>that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us; <sup>72</sup>to show the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant, <sup>73</sup>the oath that he swore to our father Abraham, to grant us <sup>74</sup>that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, <sup>75</sup>in

holiness and righteousness before him all our days. <sup>76</sup> And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, <sup>77</sup> to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins, <sup>78</sup> because of the tender mercy of our God, whereby the sunrise shall visit us from on high <sup>79</sup> to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.”

**HYMN**            “On Jordan’s Bank the Baptist’s Cry” #344 v. 1,2

- 1            On Jordan’s bank the Baptist’s cry  
              Announces that the Lord is nigh;  
              Awake and hearken, for he brings  
              Glad tidings of the King of kings!
  
- 2            Then cleansed be ev’ry life from sin;  
              Make straight the way for God within,  
              And let us all our hearts prepare  
              For Christ to come and enter there.

**SECOND READING**        *Luke 1:26–38* (Mary)

<sup>26</sup> In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, <sup>27</sup> to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. <sup>28</sup> And he came to her and said, “Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!” <sup>29</sup> But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. <sup>30</sup> And the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. <sup>31</sup> And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. <sup>32</sup> He 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, <sup>33</sup> and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.”

<sup>34</sup> And Mary said to the angel, “How will this be, since I am a

virgin?” <sup>35</sup> And 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. <sup>36</sup> And 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. <sup>37</sup> For nothing will be impossible with God.” <sup>38</sup> And 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.

**HYMN**            “On Jordan’s Bank the Baptist’s Cry” #344 v. 3, 5

3            We hail Thee as our Savior, Lord,  
              Our refuge and our great reward;  
              Without Thy grace we waste away  
              Like flow’rs that wither and decay.

5            All praise, eternal Son, to Thee  
              Whose advent sets Thy people free,  
              Whom with the Father we adore  
              And Holy Spirit evermore.

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**THIRD READING**            *Luke 2:1–7* (The infant Jesus)

**2** In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. <sup>2</sup> This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. <sup>3</sup> And all went to be registered, each to his own town. <sup>4</sup> 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, <sup>5</sup> to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. <sup>6</sup> And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. <sup>7</sup> 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.

**HYMN**

“O Little Town of Bethlehem”

#361 v.1, 4

- 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.
- 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!

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**FOURTH READING***Luke 2:8–12* (Shepherds)

<sup>8</sup> And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. <sup>9</sup> And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. <sup>10</sup> And the angel said to them, “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. <sup>11</sup> For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. <sup>12</sup> And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.”

**HYMN**

“Away in a Manger”

#365 v. 1,3



- 1      Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,  
           The little Lord Jesus laid down His sweet head.  
           The stars in the [bright] sky looked down where  
           He lay,  
           The little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.
- 3      Be near me, Lord Jesus; I ask thee to stay  
           Close by me forever and love me, I pray.  
           Bless all the dear children in Thy tender care,  
           And take us to heaven to live with Thee there.

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**FIFTH READING**                   *Luke 2:13–14* (Angels)

<sup>13</sup> And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, <sup>14</sup> “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!”

**HYMN**      “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing” #380 v. 1, 2

- 1      Hark! The herald angels sing,  
           “Glory to the newborn King;  
           Peace on earth and mercy mild,  
           God and sinners reconciled!”  
           Joyful, all ye nations, rise,  
           Join the triumph of the skies;  
           With the\_angelic host proclaim,  
           “Christ is born in Bethlehem!”
- ref     Hark! The herald angels sing,  
           “Glory to the newborn King!”
- 2      Christ, by highest heav’n adored,  
           Christ, the everlasting Lord,  
           Late in time behold Him come,

Offspring of a virgin's womb.  
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see,  
Hail the incarnate Deity!  
Pleased as Man with man to dwell,  
Jesus, our Immanuel! Refrain

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**SIXTH READING**                      *Matthew 2:1–11*      (Wise Men)

**2** Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, <sup>2</sup>saying, “Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.” <sup>3</sup>When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; <sup>4</sup>and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. <sup>5</sup>They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet: <sup>6</sup>““And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.””

<sup>7</sup>Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. <sup>8</sup>And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, “Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him.” <sup>9</sup>After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was. <sup>10</sup>When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. <sup>11</sup>And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh.

**HYMN**                      “What Child Is This”                      #370 v.1, 2

1       What child is this, who, laid to rest,  
          On Mary's lap is sleeping?  
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet  
          While shepherds watch are keeping?  
This, this is Christ the king,  
Whom shepherds guard and angels sing;  
          Haste, haste to bring Him laud,  
          The babe, the son of Mary!

2       Why lies He in such mean estate  
          Where ox and ass are feeding?  
Good Christian, fear; for sinners here  
          The silent Word is pleading.  
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!

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## **SERMON**

**CREED**       *Apostles' Creed*

**People:**       **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.**

## **PRAYER OF THE CHURCH**

**Pastor:** Dear people of God, once again we have heard the message of the angels, visited Bethlehem with shepherds and Magi, and beheld the Son of God in human flesh, born of the Virgin Mary and lying in a manger. Now let us respond with praise and prayer, rejoicing to offer Him our petitions and supplications on behalf of ourselves and everyone according to their need, confident that He will answer with all that is good, right, and best for us all.

*Silence for meditation*

**Pastor:** Merciful Father, we have lived through a time of great uncertainty and fear and now come again into Your presence on this most holy of nights. Deliver us from all epidemics, from the perils of war and violence, and from the loss of job and home. Open our hearts to receive with faith the joy of our Savior's coming and to trust in His salvation forevermore. Lord, in Your mercy,  
**People:** **hear our prayer.**

**Pastor:** Blessed Lord, give to those most in need the courage and patience to await Your deliverance, and give to us kind and generous hearts that we share Your gifts with those around us and multiply the blessing of Your rich and daily provision. Lord, in Your mercy,  
**People:** **hear our prayer.**

Pastor: O gracious God, deliver Your people from all their afflictions of body and soul, give aid and comfort to the hospitalized, be present with the aged and infirm, and give to the dying and the grieving Your peace. Lord, in Your mercy,

**People: hear our prayer.**

Pastor: O wise and faithful Father, deliver Your Church from her enemies, and provide her with faithful pastors to serve the Means of Grace to us in Your name. Give Your guidance to those who lead us in our Synod, Regions, and Circuits, and bless especially our pastors, church workers, missionaries, and those preparing for full-time service. Lord, in Your mercy,

**People: hear our prayer.**

Pastor: Mighty Lord, You have power over all things. Aid our government and elected leaders with Your Word and Spirit that they be guided by Your commands to pursue justice and work for the common good. Teach them and us the value of life and to work for the protection of the unborn, the care of the widow and orphan, and the support of the aged. Lord, in Your mercy,

**People: hear our prayer.**

Pastor: O loving God, we give You thanks that Mary heard Your Word and pondered it in her heart and that Joseph served Your Son so faithfully. Bless husbands, wives, parents, children, and all families. Help us to ponder Your Word in our hearts and to live it out that our homes be places of blessing and peace. Accept our songs of praise and the tithes and offerings we bring in response to Your mercy and as signs of our gratitude and faith. Lord, in Your mercy,

**People:**        **hear our prayer.**

Pastor:        Lord, remember us in Your kingdom and teach us  
to pray:

**People:**        **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.**

## **BENEDICTION**

Pastor:        The Lord bless you and keep you.  
                      The Lord make His face shine on you and be  
                      gracious to you.  
                      The Lord look upon you with favor and ✠ give  
                      you peace. *Numbers 6:24–26*

**People:**        **Amen! Glory to God in the highest! And peace  
to His people on earth!**

**HYMN**        “Silent Night, Holy Night” #363

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 Thy holy face  
With the dawn of redeeming grace,  
    Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth,  
    Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth.

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