

Christmas Eve Children's Program/Candlelight Service
American Lutheran Church, Filley, Nebraska
December 24, 2020

WELCOME

OPENING PRAYER FOR CHRISTMAS:

Loving God, help us remember the birth of Jesus, that we may share in the song of the angels, the gladness of the shepherds, and worship of the wise men. Close the door of hate and open the door of love all over the world. Let kindness come with every gift and good desires with every greeting. Deliver us from evil by the blessing which Christ brings, and teach us to be merry with clear hearts. May the Christmas morning make us happy to be thy children, and Christmas evening bring us to our beds with grateful thoughts, forgiving and forgiven, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

CHRISTMAS EVE OUTDOOR NATIVITY 2020

Luke 2:1-20; Matthew 2:1-15, NRSV

"O Little Town of Bethlehem"

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.

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In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph 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. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And 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.

"Away in a Manger"

1. Away in a manger, no crib for his bed, The little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head; The stars in the sky looked down where lay, The little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.

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

"Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

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 angelic hosts proclaim, "Christ is born in Bethlehem!" Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King!"

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When 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." So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

"It Came Upon the Midnight Clear"

1. It came upon the midnight clear, that glorious song of old, from angels bending near the earth to touch their harps of gold: "Peace on the earth, good will to men, from heaven's all-gracious King." The world in solemn stillness lay, to hear the angels sing.

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In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage." When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet: 'And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel.'"

Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage."

"We Three Kings of Orient Are"

1. We three kings of Orient are; Bearing gifts we traverse afar, Field and fountain, moor and mountain, Following yonder star. O star of wonder, star of light, Star with royal beauty bright, Westward leading, still proceeding, Guide us to thy perfect light.

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When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road. Now after they had left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him." Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt, and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, "Out of Egypt I have called my son."

All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" which means,...**"God with us."**

And all these centuries later we retell this wonderful story of when God came to us as a baby. We tell the stories of angels and shepherd, wisemen and stables, mangers and Mary. And this simple retelling will ring as true in your hearts as it did the first time - for the message does not change - but the message continues to change hearts. We wish each and everyone of you the peace of Christmas lived as God had

planned - one that is full of discovery and yet has no fear. One that sees a baby born in a humble stable as the King of Kings.

“Joy to the World”

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. 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 of his love.

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“Let There Be Peace on Earth”

Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me, Let there be peace on earth, the peace that was meant to be. With God our Creator, His children all are we. Let us walk with each other, in perfect harmony.

Let peace begin with me, let this be the moment now. With every step I take, let this be my solemn vow: to take each moment and live each moment in peace eternally. Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me!

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PRAYER OF CONFESSION: (based on Matthew 2: 1-18)

Gracious God, we would like to be among those who saw the coming of the Christ Child, those who dropped all that they were doing and traveled to worship the coming of God's love into this world. We would like to be those who cared for God in infant vulnerability; who tickled and cuddled and comforted the growing child, that he might know love and safety. And yet, merciful God, we must recognize all the times we are more like Herod. Whenever we, in our actions or in our inactions, find our own need for control more compelling than the needs of others for health and safety. Whenever we cling to the security of our privilege, rather than standing up for the rights of the oppressed. Whenever we are complicit in the harming of innocents for the sake of profit, or power, or because we fear to know, and to change, the injustices of this world.

Loving God, we confess our sins against you and one another, and pray that you will fill us with your light, that we may live our lives as true disciples in your name, without counting the cost. In the name of Christ, the one who showed us the way, we pray. Amen.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

God's light is present in this world. Present in the Christ child, born to lead us out of darkness. Present in the star, in all that guides us to love. God's light is in the world, and the darkness did not overcome it. God's grace is in the world, and our mis-steps will not overcome it. We are loved, we are forgiven. Alleluia! Amen.

HOLY COMMUNION

As we celebrate his birth on this night, as we seek to follow him every day, we proclaim that mystery known as faith. Holy one, you continue to pour your Spirit on the gifts of the holy meal of this night and on all your children gathered in this moment. Here, God invites us to share in the broken bread which gives us the strength to share hope with those in despair, to challenge the injustice all around us, to rebuild neighborhoods others rush past.

Here, God invites us to share in the cup which is poured into our souls so we may offer a welcome to all who are forgotten, embrace those who grieve amidst so much joy, reconcile with those from whom we are estranged. And when that birth of new life comes, as all time and history comes to an end, we will

join our sisters and brothers of every time, and of every place, in praising you forever and ever, God in Community, Holy in One. Amen.

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

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.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

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.

THE DISTRIBUTION

As Pastor says: "The body of Christ, given for you", you are invited to eat the bread.

As Pastor says, "The blood of Christ, shed for you", you are invited to drink the grape juice.

THE POST-COMMUNION BLESSING

The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in his grace. **C: Amen.**

THE POST-COMMUNION PRAYER

Great and saving God, you have gathered your scattered people around gifts of grain and wine, the body and blood of our Savior, Jesus Christ. As we, like the shepherds, return on our way, may we proclaim all we have heard and seen, praising you in word and loving deed for the gift of Jesus, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD SHINES FOREVER

P: And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. And God saw that the light was good. God is light and in God there is no darkness at all. If we walk in the light, as God is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, God's own Son, cleanses us from all sin. Arise, shine, for your Light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you!

P: Almighty God, you made this holy night shine with the brightness of the true Light. Grant that here on earth we may walk in the light of Jesus' presence and in the last day wake to the brightness of his glory; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **C: Amen.**

P: Almighty God, you have filled us with the new light of the Word who became flesh and lived among us. Let the light of our faith shine in all that we do; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **C: Amen.**

SILENT NIGHT, HOLY NIGHT"

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.

**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!**

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BENEDICTION

The pastor will extinguish her candle and then all will extinguish their candles.

CLOSING HYMN: **"Go Tell it on the Mountain"**

Go, tell it on the mountain, over the hills and everywhere. Go, tell it on the mountain that Jesus Christ is born. While shepherds kept their watching o'er silent flocks by night. Behold throughout the heavens there shone a holy light. Go, tell it on the mountain, over the hills and everywhere. Go, tell it on the mountain that Jesus Christ is born.

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WELCOME! We warmly welcome you to this evening's celebration of the birth of the Christ Child and wish you all a very blessed Christmas!

YOU ARE WELCOME to go to our website at www.filleylutheranchurch.com or by scanning this QR code to get the link to our facebook page and watch a replay of this service.

