

Notes regarding worship options thru the new year – December 21, 2021

Best wishes for a very happy holiday season. We hope you can join us for a Christmas Eve Candlelit service this **Friday, December 24th at 6:00 PM**. Both the voice and bell choirs will be on hand to joyously celebrate the birth of our Savior with special music, carols, and readings. Please come if you are able, as we continue to sit socially distant and wear masks while inside the building.

Holy Cross will **NOT** be holding a service this coming Sunday, December 26, 2021. All of you are invited to Christ the Good Shepherd Lutheran Church to join with them as they celebrate a “Casual Christmas” at 10:00 AM.

The church office will be closed from December 24 through January 2nd, though the phones and emails will be monitored, and messages returned. No mailing will be sent out during this week.

We return for a worship service of the Word and Sacrament lead by our Interim, Pastor Curtis Zieske on Sunday, January 2, 2022, at 10:00 AM. We will celebrate Epiphany on the 2nd, followed by the Baptism of our Lord on the 9th.

The Giving Envelope booklets for 2022 are here. If you would like to receive your booklet and are not able to come into the church, please contact the office and we can make arrangements to get yours to you.

Your generosity abounds despite the difficult times. Please note the message of thank you from the Faith In Action team and the families that were showered with your gifts that is included in this mailing.

In closing, we pass along the words from the Presiding Bishop of the ELCA,

This is our second pandemic Christmas. We thought this would be over so long ago. And still, we wear masks; we're physically distant; we can't be with friends and family as we used to do. And also, there's so much that's broken in this world, so much that tells us, “Why have hope? Just give up.”

But we have a hope that's stronger than any of this, stronger even than death. The hope of God comes in the form of a tiny baby, a helpless child; nevertheless, who grew to a man and in his fragile strength was willing to die on the cross and was raised again.

I don't know what next Christmas will bring. I do not know what New Year's will bring. But I do know we have hope.

St. Paul put it this way: “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”

Merry Christmas, dear church.

The Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton

Merry Christmas Project.

I had a great experience this Wednesday. Suzanne Stephens asked me to help with the Christmas gifts project for families who needed a hand up in the Washington Elementary area. For those who may not know, we have a very active partnership with Washington Elementary School. In this project we adopted 9 families that Washington staff identified as needing a little help to have a Merry Christmas for their kids. The gifts-for-kids needs of each family were posted in the narthex and many of you picked up lists and purchased presents for the kids. Pat Bryant, Peggy Sell, and Naomi Tweet joined them for a big Christmas present wrap. Each kid received 3 gifts with their names on them. Thanks to each one of you who helped put a Christmas morning smile on the faces of some great kids.

But the project didn't stop with presents for kids. Gae Nichols, Suzanne, Carolyn Ford and Ali shopped for, built and distributed food boxes specifically designed for each family's size, needs and desires. Wednesday morning Peggy and I joined Suzanne and Gae to load tables in the gym with food and presents for each family. You could just feel the joy and gratitude of each family as they loaded their cars with the promise of a Merry Christmas. Funding for this project came from Thrivent project cards and personal gifts from many of you. You know, Santa doesn't always come in a sleigh. Sometimes he arrives on the love of Christ reflected from good people like you. Christmas hugs to all of you who made Christmas merrier for these families.

At the same time in the same space Mano-a-Mono was spreading Christmas joy to families who can benefit from a little help with gifts for their kids. When I walked into the gym that morning I saw table after table loaded to overflowing with gifts for children. Under the direction of La Casita's director, Maria Lemus, volunteers from Mano-a-Mano were welcoming referred families by appointment to walk through these tables and do Christmas shopping for their kids. Many grateful families did not have to choose between food on the table and gifts for their kids.

Witnessing the love of Christ shared with the community by volunteers from Holy Cross, Mano-a-Mano and Washington Elementary School this morning has certainly enriched my Christmas and renewed my faith that Christ is alive and his love shining through this Christmas as we spread his gift to others. Once again, Thanks to all of you who helped make these projects come alive and keep Christ alive for families in our community.

Enriched by your generosity, Loran Sell



**Friday, December 24, 2021
Nativity of Our Lord: Christmas Eve**

WELCOME

In winter's deepest night, we welcome the light of the Christ child. God knows, and shows up, that Light and Darkness both bring good things - important things - for our growth and sharing. 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. Energized by the gift of light and dark we go forth to share Christ's love with the whole world.

GATHERING

The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God.

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

All may make the sign of the cross, the sign marked at baptism, as the presiding minister begins.

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God,
Love from the beginning,
Word made flesh,
Breath of heaven.

Amen.

Let us confess our sinfulness before God and one another,
trusting in God's endless mercy and love.

Silence is kept for reflection.

Merciful God,

we confess that we are not perfect.

We have said and done things we regret.

**We have tried to earn your redeeming grace,
while denying it to others.**

**We have resisted your call
to be your voice in the world.**

Forgive us, loving God.

**Give us your righteousness,
the strength to put aside our failures,
and the courage to try again. Amen.**

Dear people of God, hear the good news:

Christ the Savior is born!

You are loved and forgiven

in the name of † Jesus, who has come among us.

You are freed from proving that you deserve to be loved,

because God's love is given to you

as the most precious gift of all.

Rejoice in this love and share it with the world.

Amen.

Prayer of the Day

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.

Amen.

First Reading: Isaiah 9:2-7

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.

“O, Little Town of Bethlehem” ELW 279

Second Reading: Titus 2:11-14

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.

“Angels, from the Realms of Glory” ELW 275

Gospel: Luke 2:1-7

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.

“It Came Upon a Midnight Clear” ELW 282

Gospel: Luke 2:8-14

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!”

“Hark, The Heralds Angels Sing” ELW 270

Gospel: Luke 2:15-20

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.

“O, Come, All Ye Faithful” ELW 283

Let us pray;

**Generous God, you have given us life, this community,
and these gifts of the earth that become the meal of your grace.
Move in our hearts, that we might use your gifts to bring hope and
blessing wherever we go, through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Long ago, you made us in your image, Oh Lord, and though we
shattered it, in your mercy you sent your Son to restore your image
in us. Having suffered for us and died our death, he lives and reigns
at your right hand.

LORD'S PRAYER

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us.

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name,
your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as 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.**

A PRAYER FOR CHRISTMAS

O Christ, who saves us,
your coming at Christmas brings peace to our weary souls.
Father God, your glory transforms lives
and changes the world. Inspire us to do the same.
Fill us, Spirit of Truth, to overflow with your joy,
As we share the gift of Christmas with family, friends, and strangers
enjoying the diversity of faith practices that abound in your world.
Amen.

BENEDICTION

May Christ, who by his incarnation
has filled us with grace and truth,
give you peace this Christmas and always.
Almighty God, Father, † Son, and the Holy Spirit,
bless you now and forever.
Amen.

"Joy to the World" ELW 267

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.

You come to us in gatherings of your church across the globe. Unite us with those who celebrate your birth even when they are weighed down by grief, loss, poverty, hunger, or injustice. Merciful God,

receive our prayer.

You come to us in the diverse splendor of the universe. Grant us the humility to trust our place in the network of creation, that we live in service to you and the natural world. Merciful God,

receive our prayer.

You come to us through relationships of many kinds: families, friendships, communities, and nations. Guide us in these relationships, that we recognize the Christ child in one another and show your love to those most vulnerable. Merciful God,

receive our prayer.

You come to us through people whom the world forgets. Poor shepherds and an imprisoned Paul announced your good news. Send your Spirit to all who are imprisoned, struggling with addiction, unwell, or in any need this day (*especially*). Merciful God,

receive our prayer.

You come to us in acts of justice and forgiveness. Open our hearts to forgive one another, without permitting injustice. Supply us with the wisdom to be clothed with love, binding all things together in perfect harmony. Merciful God,

receive our prayer.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

You come to us through those who have died yet live with you forever (*especially*). We give thanks for Stephen, deacon and martyr, who gave his life to tell the story of your love. 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.**