

CAROL WORSHIP FOR CHRISTMAS December 31, 2023
Advent Lutheran Church and St. Paul's Lutheran Church

PRELUDE

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

HYMN ELW 288 GOOD CHRISTIAN FRIENDS REJOICE

**Good Christian friends, rejoice
With heart and soul and voice;
Give ye heed to what we say:
Jesus Christ is born today;
Ox and ass before him bow,
And he is in the manger now.
Christ is born today! Christ is born today!**

**Good Christian friends, rejoice
With heart and soul and voice;
Now ye hear of endless bliss,
Jesus Christ was born for this!
He has opened heaven's door,
And we are blessed forever more.
Christ was born for this! Christ was born for this!**

**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 his everlasting hall.
Christ was born to save! Christ was born to save!**

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.

THE LITANY OF LIGHT

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.

The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it.

Those who dwell in the land of deep darkness, on them has light shined.

We have beheld Christ's glory, glory as the only Son from the Father.

For to us a child is born, to us a Son is given.

In him was life, and the life was the light of all people.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

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

HYMN ELW 292 LOVE HAS COME

Love has come, a light in the darkness!

Love shines forth in the Bethlehem skies.

See, all heaven has come to proclaim it;

See how their song of joy arises:

Love! Love! Born unto you, a Saviour!

Love! Love! Glory to God on high.

Love is born, come share in the wonder.

Love is God now asleep in the hay.

See the glow in the eyes of his mother;

What is the name her heart is saying?

Love! Love! Love is the name she whispers;

Love! Love! Jesus, Emmanuel.

Love has come, and never will leave us!

Love is life everlasting and free.

Love is Jesus within and among us.

Love is the peace our hearts are seeking.

Love! Love! Love is the gift of Christmas.

Love! Love! Praise to you, God on high.

GOSPEL PART ONE MATTHEW 1:18-25 *Pastor*

Here is the story of how the chosen One was born. His mother, Bitter Tears (Mary) , had been promised in marriage to He Gives Sons (Joseph). But before they came together in marriage, while still a virgin, she found out that she was carrying a baby in her womb from the Holy Spirit. He Gives Sons (Joseph) was a man of honour. He did not want to bring her trouble and open shame, so he thought about secretly releasing her from the marriage promise. As he wondered about these things, a messenger from the Great Spirit appeared to him in a dream and said, “He Gives Sons, descendant of Much Loved One (David), do not be afraid to take Bitter Tears (Mary) to be your wife, because the Holy Spirit has given her this child. She will give birth to a son. You will name him Creator Sets Free (Jesus) because he will set his people free from their bad hearts and broken ways.”

This gave full meaning to the words of Creator, spoken long ago by the prophet, “A young virgin will be with child and give birth to a son. They will call his name Immanuel, which in our tribal language means Creator Is With Us”. When He Gives Sons (Joseph) woke up, he followed the guidance given him in the dream and took Bitter Tears (Mary) to be his wife. But he did not have sexual relations with her until after the child was born, and he named the child Creator Sets Us Free (Jesus).

SOLO: “The Holly and The Ivy”

GOSPEL PART TWO MATTHEW 2:1-11 *Lay*

When the time drew close for Bitter Tears (Mary) to have her child, the government of the People of Iron (Romans) ordered that the people be numbered and put on government rolls. This happened during the time that Powerful Protector (Quirinius) was the governor of Bright Sun (Syria). All the Tribal Members were required to travel to their own ancestral village to register. He Gives Sons (Joseph) and Bitter Tears (Mary) set out on a long journey from Seed Planter Village (Nazareth) in Circle of Nations (Galilee) to House of Bread (Bethlehem) in the Land of Promise (Judea), the village of their ancestor, the great chief Much Loved One (David) The time for Bitter Tears (Mary) to have her child was upon her! But no place could be found in the lodging house, so He Gives Sons (Joseph) found a sheep cave where it was

warm and dry. There she gave birth to her son. They wrapped him in a soft warm blanket and laid him on a baby board. Then they placed him on a bed of straw in a feeding trough. That night in the fields nearby, shepherds were keeping watch over their sheep. Suddenly a great light from above was shining all around them. A spirit-messenger from Creator appeared to them. They shook with fear and trembled as the messenger said to them "Do not fear! I bring you the good story that will be told to all nations. Today in the village of Much Loved One (David), an honoured chief has been born who will set his people free. He is the Chosen One!"

HYMN ELW 248 TWAS IN THE MOON OF WINTERTIME

**'Twas in the moon of wintertime
When all the birds had fled
That mighty Gitchi Manitou
Sent angel choirs instead
Before their light the stars grew dim
And wond'ring hunters heard the hymn:**

***Refrain:* Jesus, your King, is born;
Jesus is born!
In excelsis gloria!**

**Within a lodge of broken bark,
The tender Babe was found
A ragged robe of rabbit skin
Enwrapped His beauty round
And as the hunter braves drew nigh,
The angel song rang loud and high: *Refrain***

**O children of the forest free,
O you of Manitou
The Holy Child of earth and heav'n
Is born today for you
Come kneel before the radiant Boy
Who brings you beauty, peace and joy: *Refrain***

GOSPEL PART THREE MISSING LUKE 2:1-20 *Pastor*

When the time drew close for Bitter Tears (Mary) to have her child, the government of the People of Iron (Romans) ordered that the people be numbered and put on government rolls. This happened during the time that Powerful Protector (Quirinius) was the governor of Bright Sun (Syria). All the Tribal Members were required to travel to their own ancestral village to register. He Gives Sons (Joseph) and Bitter Tears (Mary) set out on a long journey from Seed Planter Village (Nazareth) in Circle of Nations (Galilee), to House of Bread (Bethlehem) in the Land of Promise (Judea), the village of their ancestor, the great chief Much Loved One (David).

The time for Bitter Tears (Mary) to have her child was upon her! But no place could be found in the lodging house, so He Gives Sons (Joseph) found a sheep cave where it was warm and dry. There she gave birth to her son. They wrapped him in a soft, warm blanket and laid him on a baby board. Then they placed him on a bed of straw in a feeding trough. That night in the fields nearby, shepherds were keeping watch over their sheep. Suddenly a great light from above was shining all around them. A spirit-messenger from Creator appeared to them. They shook with fear and trembled as the messenger said to them, "Do not fear! I bring you the good story that will be told to all nations. Today in the village of Much Loved One (David) an Honoured Chief has been born who will set his people free. He is the Chosen One!"

The spirit-messenger continued, "This is how you will know him – you will find the child wrapped in a blanket and lying in a feeding trough." Suddenly, next to the messenger, a great number of spirit-warriors from the spirit-world above appeared giving thanks to Creator, saying, "All honour to the One Above Us All, and let peace and good will follow all who walk upon the earth."

When the messengers returned to the spirit-world above, the shepherds said to each other, "Let us go and see this great thing Creator has told us." So they hurried to the village of Chief Much Loved One (David) and found Bitter Tears (Mary), He Gives Sons (Joseph), and the child, who, just as they were told, was lying in a feeding trough!

The shepherds began to tell everyone what they had seen and heard about this child, and all who heard their story were amazed.

Bitter Tears (Mary) kept these things hidden in her heart and wondered what all this would mean. The shepherds returned to their fields, giving thanks to the Great Spirit for the wonders they had seen and heard.

MUSIC MEDITATION: *“Christmas Meditation”*

GOSPEL PART FOUR LUKE 2:21-40 *Lay*

Eight days after the birth of their son, in keeping with the traditional cutting of the flesh ceremony, they named him Creator Sets Us Free (Jesus), the name given them by the spirit-messenger before the child was born.

Then, about one moon later, the time came for them to present their child to the Great Spirit in the Sacred Village of Peace (Jerusalem). This was for their cleansing ceremony, an ancient tradition from the lawgiver Drawn From The Water (Moses) who said, “every male child who is first to open the womb will be holy in the Great Spirit’s sight. Bring two turtledoves or two young pigeons to be burned with fire as a sweet-smelling smoke offering.

When they arrived at the sacred lodge in Village of Peace (Jerusalem) they were welcomed by Creator Hears (Simeon), a respected elder who did what was right in the Great Spirit’s sight, and waited patiently for him to fulfill his promises to the tribes of Wrestles With Creator (Israel). The Holy Spirit rested on him and told him he would not die until he saw Creator’s Chosen One with his own eyes. As Creator Hears (Simeon) followed the guidance of the Spirit, he arrived at the sacred lodge just in time to see He Gives Sons (Joseph) and Bitter Tears (Mary) bringing their child for the traditional ceremony given in their tribal law.

Creator Hears (Simeon) took the child into his arms and spoke words of blessing over him. “O Great Father” he prayed, “I now see with my own eyes the one you have prepared for all nations, the one who will heal our broken ways and set us free. He will make a clear path for all people to see and bring honour to the tribes of Wrestles with Creator (Israel). Now just as you have said I can cross over in peace.” The child’s father and mother were amazed at what was being said. So Creator Hears (Simeon) spoke blessing words over them also. He then turned to Bitter Tears (Mary) and spoke softly in her ear.

“This child has been chosen for the fall and rising of many in the tribes of Wrestles with Creator (Israel). He will be a sign that will be spoken against exposing the thoughts of many.”

His voice softened as she looked sadly into his eyes.

He said to her, “Even your own spirit will be pierced through like a sharp arrow.”

As they pondered his words a holy women named Woman of Goodwill (Anna) welcomed them. She was an elder of the tribe Walks With A Glad Heart (Asher) and the daughter of Face of Creator (Phanuel). She had married at a young age and lived with her husband for seven winters, but had now been a widow for eighty-four winters. She served the Great Spirit at his sacred lodge night and day with fasting and many prayers. When she saw the child, she gave thanks to Creator and began telling about the child to all who were waiting for Creator to fulfill the promises he made to the Sacred Village of Peace (Jerusalem).

After they performed all the ceremonies that Creator’s Law required, they returned to Circle of Nations (Galilee) to their home in Seed Planter Village (Nazareth). In this village the child grew strong in his spirit and was filled with wisdom, for the blessing of the Great Spirit was resting on him.

HYMN I WONDER AS I WANDER

**I wonder as I wander out under the sky
How Jesus the Saviour did come for to die.
For poor ord’nary people like you and like I
I wonder as I wander out under the sky**

**When Mary birthed Jesus, all in a cow’s stall,
Came wise men and farmers and shepherds and all.
And high from the heavens a star-light did fall;
The promise of the ages it then did recall.**

**If Jesus had wanted for any wee thing,
A star in the sky or a bird on the wing,
Or all of God’s angels in heav’n for to sing.
He surely could have it, ‘cause he was the king.**

**I wonder as I wander out under the sky
How Jesus the Saviour did come for to die.
For poor ord’nary people like you and like I
I wonder as I wander out under the sky**

INTERCESSORY PRAYERS

Reader One

Joining our voices with song of the angels, let us pray for the church, the world, and all who are in need.

A Brief Silence

The shepherds sing “Jesus Christ is born!”. Let your church throughout the world proclaim this good news everywhere. Unite the voices of all your faithful people in songs of praise and rejoicing.

Lord in your mercy.....**hear our prayer.**

Reader Two

Heaven and nature sing. Give respite to flocks, fields and those who tend them. Come near to us in the beauty of nighttime, the shining of stars, and the hush of a world at rest. Carry us through these days of winter as the earth renews for Spring rebirth. Help us to see the beauty in every season. May our wonder at your creation rouse our care for all the earth.

Lord in your mercy.....**hear our prayer.**

Reader One

The angels sing, “Peace on earth”. Come quickly to still the strife of the world. Hush the noise of war and violence in places of unrest, especially in the land of Jesus’ birth..... Inspire leaders and people of all nations to seek lasting peace and justice for all.

Lord in your mercy.....**hear our prayer.**

Reader Two

Mary sings melodies of comfort to her newborn child. Bring rest and reassurance to those facing struggles this season. Bless the labour of healthcare and essential workers and vaccine providers, ease the burdens of all who face unemployment and those needing food and shelter.

Bring comfort to all who long for companionship. We pray especially for the safety of our loved ones wherever they may be.

Lord in your mercy.....**hear our prayer.**

Reader One

Help us seek your joy and holy presence as we celebrate this Christmas.

Revive aching spirits and restore tired bodies. We pray for all in our hearts.....

Pause

Bring healing and wholeness as we long for mercy.

Lord in your mercy.....**hear our prayer.**

Reader Two

You are the fullness of grace and truth O God, and we seek your inspiration for our ministry in your name. Grant us love for our neighbour and creativity as we continue in mission in this community.

Lord in your mercy.....**hear our prayer.**

Reader One

In the love and joy we make these prayers in the name of Christ, born for us: Jesus our Lord. **Amen.**

LORD'S PRAYER *adapted in the New Zealand Prayer Book*

Eternal Spirit, Earth-maker, Pain-bearer, Life-giver,

Source of all that is and that shall be,

Father and Mother of us all,

Loving God, in whom is heaven:

The hallowing of your name echoes through the universe!

The way of your justice be followed by the peoples of the world!

Your heavenly will be done by all created beings!

Your communion of peace and freedom sustain our hope and come on Earth.

With the bread we need for today, feed us.

In the hurts we absorb from one another, forgive us.

In times of temptation and test, strengthen us.

From trials too great to endure, spare us.

From the grip of all that is evil, free us.

For you reign in the glory of the power that is love, now and forever.

Amen.

HYMN ELW 300 THE FIRST NOEL

The first Noel the angels did say,

Was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay,

In fields where they, Lay keeping their sheep

On a cold winter's night that was so deep.

***Refrain:* Noel Noel Noel Noel!**

Born is the King of Israel!

They looked up and saw a star

Shining in the East beyond them far,

And to the earth it gave great light,

And so it continued both day and night. *Refrain*

And by the light of that same star
Three wise men came from country far,
To seek for a King was their intent
And to follow the star wherever it went. *Refrain*

This star drew nigh to the northwest
Over Bethlehem it took its rest,
And there it did both stop and stay
Right over the place where Jesus lay. *Refrain*

Then entered in those wise men three
Full reverently upon their knee,
And offered there in His presence
Their gold, and myrrh and frankincense. *Refrain*

RESPONSIVE PRAYER

It is you, loving God, who lights our path with truth.

Your Word, Jesus, is truth.

In his light, draw all to the manger

to gather in wonder with the shepherds.

In his light, draw all to the manger

to kneel in reverence with the wise ones.

In his light, draw all to the manger

to sing for joy with the angels.

In the brightness of his life

cast away the darkness of injustice, poverty, and hunger in the world.

It is you, loving God, who meets us on our way.

In the light of Jesus, show the world the way of life. Amen.

BLESSING

Almighty God, Father, + Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever.

Amen.

HYMN ELW 267 JOY TO THE WORLD

**Joy to the World, the Lord is come!
Let earth receive her King
Let every heart prepare Him room
And Heaven and nature sing
And Heaven and nature sing
And Heaven, and Heaven, and nature sing**

**Joy to the World, the Savior reigns!
Let men their songs employ
While fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains
Repeat the sounding joy
Repeat the sounding joy
Repeat, repeat, the sounding joy**

**No more let sins and sorrows 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**

**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**

DISMISSAL

**Glory to God in the highest! Peace to God's people on earth!
Go in peace. Share the gift of Jesus. Thanks be to God!**

POSTLUDE