

“Growing God’s Kingdom”



CHRISTMAS EVE 2023

December 24th, 2023

MESSIAH LUTHERAN CHURCH

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THIS EVENING’S INTRODUCTION: *In winter’s deepest night, we welcome the light of the Christ child. 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. Filled with the light that shines in our lives, we go forth to share the light of Christ with the whole world.*

WELCOME

This evening we would like to welcome you to our celebration of the birth of Christ. This festival is one of the most beautiful and moving of the church year reminding us that God has freely chosen to submit himself to the limits, pains and suffering of this world. He has done this that He might dwell with us in the flesh and share our experience that we might have real hope through Him.

It is through this incarnation, being made flesh, which Christ's sacrifice for our sins on Good Friday is made possible and the reality of Christ's resurrection on Easter is proven to be for you.

This evening the forgiveness of sins given for you is once again made incarnate as Christ offers himself in His Holy Supper. It is in this meal where Jesus says to us, "This is my body given for you," that once again you receive the undeniable, physical assurance that God's grace applies to you specifically this day.

The life of every Christian is dependent on this very grace from God. We hope and pray that you will join with the Messiah Family to regularly partake of the assurance of God's grace offered in this meal. You are invited to come and join with us as we gather weekly to give thanks to God for His many blessings and to ask His Spirit be upon us as we serve Him and our neighbors.

Thank you again for blessing us with your presence this evening! We hope that you are also blessed by your participation with us and we pray that the peace of Christ may be upon you and yours in this Holy Season.



host, praising God and saying, ¹⁴ "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"

[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.]

GATHERING CAROL

"O Come, All Ye Faithful" (#45)

- 1 Oh, come, all ye faithful, Joyful and triumphant!
Oh, come ye, oh, come ye to Bethlehem;
Come and behold him Born the king of angels:

Refrain:

Oh, come, let us adore him, Oh, come, let us adore him,
Oh, come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord!

- 2 The highest, most holy, Light of Light eternal,
Born of a virgin, a mortal he comes;
Son of the Father Now in flesh appearing! **[Refrain]**
- 3 Sing, choirs of angels, Sing in exultation, Sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!
Glory to God In the highest: **[Refrain]**
- 4 Yea, Lord, we greet thee, Born this happy morning; Jesus, to Thee be glory giv'n!
Word of the Father, Now in flesh appearing: **[Refrain]**

CHILDREN'S HOMILY

Pastor Leister

ANTHEM

"Hallelujah!"

by Leonard Cohen

PRAYER OF THE DAY

P Let us pray...

C 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.

OLD TESTAMENT LESSON:

Isaiah 9:2-7

Hannah Ehrisman

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.

OLD TESTAMENT CAROL

“O Little Town of Bethlehem” (#41)

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.

PSALM 96 (responsively by verse)

Harrison Mummah

¹Sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth.

²**Sing to the LORD, bless the name of the LORD; proclaim God's salvation from day to day.**

³Declare God's glory among the nations and God's wonders among all peoples.

⁴**For great is the LORD and greatly to be praised, more to be feared than all gods.**

⁵As for all the gods of the nations, they are but idols; but you, O LORD, have made the heavens.

⁶**Majesty and magnificence are in your presence; power and splendor are in your sanctuary.**

⁷Ascribe to the LORD, you families of the peoples, ascribe to the LORD honor and power.

⁸**Ascribe to the LORD the honor due the holy name; bring offerings and enter the courts of the LORD.**

⁹Worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness; tremble before the LORD, all the earth.

¹⁰**Tell it out among the nations: "The LORD is king! The one who made the world so firm that it cannot be moved will judge the peoples with equity."**

¹¹Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea thunder and all that is in it; let the field be joyful and all that is therein.

¹²**Then shall all the trees of the wood shout for joy at your coming, O LORD, for you come to judge the earth.**

¹³You will judge the world with righteousness and the peoples with your truth.

PSALM CAROL

“Joy to the World” (#39)

Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth receive its 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.

THE EPISTLE LESSON:

Titus 2:11-14

Gabby Reed

The 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.

EPISTLE CAROL

“It Came upon the Midnight Clear” (#54)

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 all, From heav'n's all-gracious king."
The world in solemn stillness lay To hear the angels sing.

THE GOSPEL:

John 1:1-14

Haley Mummah

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being ⁴in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. ⁵The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. ⁶There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. ⁸He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. ⁹The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. ¹⁰He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. ¹¹He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. ¹²But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, ¹³who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God. ¹⁴And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

HOMILY

Pastor Leister

CAROL OF THE DAY

“Hark! The Herald Angels Sing” (#60)

- 1 Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the new-born king;
Peace on earth, and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled."
Joyful, all you nations, rise; Join the triumph of the skies;
With the angelic hosts proclaim "Christ is born in Bethlehem!"

Refrain:

- Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the new-born 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, incarnate deity!
Pleased as man with us to dwell, Jesus, our Immanuel! **[Refrain]**
 - 3 Hail, the heav'n-born Prince of Peace! Hail the sun of righteousness!
Light and life to all he brings, Ris'n with healing in his wings.
Mild He lays his glory by, Born that we no more may die,
Born to raise each child of earth, Born to give us second birth. **[Refrain]**

NICENE CREED (all)

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, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary and became truly human. 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, who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified, who 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.

* PEACE

P The peace of Christ be with you always.

C And also with you.

(The congregation may greet one another in the name of the Lord from their pews at whatever level of physical contact with which they are comfortable).

Duet: Christina Martin & Slone Smith

“All is Well”

by M. W. Smith & W. Kirkpatrick

OFFERING PRESENTATION

OFFERTORY

“Let All Together Praise Our God”

(revised wording)

Let all together praise our God before his glorious throne;

For he will open heav’n above to give us his own Son, to give us his own Son.

OFFERING PRAYER

P God of abundance, receive and bless these gifts we have offered. Join our hearts with the song of the angels, and gather us at your table of celebration. Strengthen us to share with all the world the abundance of your grace upon grace, poured out in Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh.

C Amen.

* THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

P Glory to God in the highest.

C And peace to his people on earth.

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.

* EUCHARISTIC PRAYER

P We give you thanks, Father, through Jesus Christ, your beloved Son, whom you sent in this end of the ages to save and redeem us and to proclaim to us your will.

He is your Word, inseparable from you, through whom you created all things, and in whom you take delight. He is your Word, sent from heaven to a virgin’s womb. He there took on our nature and our lot and was shown forth as your Son, born of the Holy Spirit and of the virgin Mary. He, our Lord Jesus, fulfilled all your will and won for you a holy people.

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 ['trespasses'] **(all)**

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.

* INVITATION TO COMMUNION

P Glory to God in the highest! Come to the table of peace.

COMMUNION CAROL

“What Child Is This” (#40)

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!

(If you desire, you may take a gluten free wafer located on the oak pedestal on the step in the front of the chancel).

DISTRIBUTION

["**At the Chancel Rail**"] – come forward by the CENTER aisle; take a communion cup from the table by the front pew. Approach the altar to partake, then move to the chancel rail to pray. Then, return to your seat using the left or right SIDE aisle]. (Fellowship cups are available for those who wish to remain in your seat for communion)

P The Body of Christ given for you. (Wafer)

P The Blood of Christ shed for you. (Juice)

P Almighty God, you provide the true bread from heaven, your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Grant that we who have received the sacrament of his body and blood may abide in him and he in us, that we may be filled with the power of his endless life, now and forever.

C Amen.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

P God our redeemer, you have fed us at this table with gifts of grace, truth, and life. As you have gathered us in joy, send us forth as messengers of your peace. Make us shine with the good news of your glory, born to us in Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

C Amen

SOLO: Andrea Cameron

“Ave Maria”

Schubert

POST-COMMUNION CAROL

“Silent Night, Holy Night!” (#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.

DISMISSAL

L Christ the Savior is born! Go in peace. Proclaim this good news.

C Thanks be to God!

CLOSING CAROL

“Go Tell It on the Mountain” (#70)

Refrain:

Go tell it on the mountain, Over the hills and ev'rywhere;
Go tell it on the mountain That Jesus Christ is born!

- 1 While shepherds kept their watching O'er silent flocks by night,
Behold, throughout the heavens There shone a holy light. **[Refrain]**
- 2 The shepherds feared and trembled When lo, above the earth
Rang out the angel chorus That hailed our Savior's birth. **[Refrain]**
- 3 Down in a lonely manger The humble Christ was born;
And God set us salvation That blessed Christmas morn. **[Refrain]**

POSTLUDE

WELCOME TO ALL!

WITH CHRIST'S LOVE AND GOD'S GRACE, we welcome all who worship at Messiah this evening. If you are a VISITOR or GUEST, we invite you to record your visit in the guest book provided in the Narthex. If you are seeking a church home, please speak to the Pastor. Our fellowship in Jesus Christ is open and extended to all persons who confess His Lordship over all life. Young children are also encouraged to join us in our worship experience! We are so thankful that you joined us for worship on this Christmas Eve!

VISITORS AND GUESTS ARE INVITED TO COMMUNE WITH US THIS EVENING. The Sacrament of Holy Communion is offered to all who are baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and who recognize the Sacrament as the promise of the presence of the Body and Blood of our Lord. Baptized children are also welcome to receive the elements at the Lord's Table at Messiah with the guidance and consent of their parents or guardians. **Persons who may not wish to receive the bread and wine of the Lord's**

Supper are still welcome to come to the table to receive a blessing. To do so, please fold your hands and bow your head when you approach the pastor.

FOR YOUR COMFORT, restrooms are located in the hallway through the double doors of the Adult Sunday School Room and to the left.

IN THE NAME OF THE CHRIST CHILD we cordially welcome all parents and children and all who worship with us at the Family Christmas Eve Candlelight Service. May love and peace, God's gift to us in the Christ Child, fill all our hearts this night and always.

A SPECIAL "THANK YOU" to all those who are taking part in the service: the choirs and choir directors, our organists/pianists, Bob St. Clair and Slone Smith, for providing the wonderful organ/piano music for the Prelude Concert, and especially to our youth, young adults and members of Messiah, and to all those who worship here tonight.

ATTENTION KIDS! At the time of the children's sermon, all children are invited to come forward to gather around the Pastor in the chancel area.

MATTHEW 25 FUND – All loose offering at tonight's service will go to the Matthew 25 Fund to help those in need throughout the year. You can also donate to the fund by writing Matthew 25 Fund on your regular offering envelope and the amount you wish to contribute.

WE WISH ALL OF YOU a Christmas filled with blessings from God and His peace which passes all understanding.



THANK YOU TO ALL WHO GAVE POINSETTIAS to decorate the church in honor of Christ's birth.

TO THE GLORY OF GOD:

In loving memory of faithful servants Ansel and Jean McNaight, our parents, by Jane Shearer and Anne B. McNaight.

In loving memory of Abram and Ruth Shoener and Daniel and Thelma Dreibelbis by the Stephen Dreibelbis family.

In memory of Jean, George and Bill Flint and George, Sr. and Mary Lorraine Hazard by the George Hazard, Jr. family.

In honor of family and friends by George and Marylou Hazard.

In honor of Mark Harvey, many thanks, by Ron and Debbie Meinsler.

In memory of all family members by Ron and Debbie Meinsler.

In memory of our parents, Richard and Daisy Van Gavree and Paul and Dorothy Patterson, by Rich and Cindy Van Gavree.

In memory of my grandparents, John and Hulda St. Clair and Lester and Grace Parsons, by Bob St. Clair.

In loving memory of my father, Robert St. Clair, Sr. by Bob St. Clair.

In loving honor of my mother, Jeanette St. Clair, by Bob St. Clair.

In memory of my grandparents by Kenton Stuck.

In memory of our beloved wife and mother, Kay Stuck, by Ken and Kenton Stuck.

In memory of loved ones by Judy and Herman Armstrong.

In honor of my children, Susan, Carol and Kenneth and their spouses, Reg, John and Tawny, by Ruth Mummah.

In honor of my grandchildren, Harrison, Haley and Olivia, by Ruth Mummah.

In memory of my husband, Kenneth B. Mummah, and parents, Dale H. and Charlotte Henry and Harry and Martha Mummah, by Ruth Mummah.

In loving memory of Barry T. Stratford by Betty and family.

In memory of Butch Pines and Tammy Pines Walton by Sandy Pines and Dan and Michelle Stoner.

In honor of Braedon Walton by Sandy Pines and Dan and Michelle Stoner.

In memory of Dale and Alice Swartz by Thomas and Carol Swartz Wolff.

In memory of Fred and Lillian Houtz and Charles and Hazel Swartz by Thomas and Carol Swartz Wolff.

In memory of Ronald A. Chambers by Deborah Chambers.

In memory of Kenneth E. Geedey by Deborah Chambers.

In memory of Robert E. 'Hap' and Dorothy Smith, Lloyd and Flossie Showers and Clarence and Beulah Leister by Pastor Sam and Linda Leister and family.

In memory of Dorothy and Karen Swab and Rick Fultz by Nick, Bethanie, Thea and Brea Beward.

In memory of Johnny, Donald, Sr., Margaret, Donald, Jr., and Ronnie Beward by Nick, Bethanie, Thea and Brea Beward.

In honor of our Pappy and Mam-Maw Leister and Nammy Beward by Thea and Brea Beward.

In memory of John and Helen Sieber by George and Kay Varner and family.

In memory of Martin and Ruth Varner by George and Kay Varner and family.

In memory of loved ones by Ray and Jane Miller.

In memory of Kim Kerstetter by Sabrina Shipp.

In honor of our family: Stephanie, Lee, Nathaniel, Valerie, Zeran and Shonna, by Dave and Brenda Duncan.

In memory of loved ones by Don and Barb Geedey.

In memory of Al McClure by Kay and Ken Eyler.

In memory of loved ones by Larry Goss.

In honor of my grandchildren by Cynthia Smith.

In memory of my husband, Daniel by Tammy Brackbill.

In honor of my children, Tirzah, Chris and Nick by Tammy Brackbill

In honor and memory of loved ones by Larry and Diana Wise.

In honor of our daughters and their families by Ron and Christie Yorks.

In memory of Mr. and Mrs. F. Paul Smith and Mr. and Mrs. Kermit L. Witmer by David and Janet Smith.

The large Poinsettia in the front of the sanctuary was placed in memory of Joyce Yetter by Vernon Gunnion and family.

The large, variegated Poinsettia was placed in honor of God's people at Messiah by Pastor Sam and Linda Leister

MEMORIALS FOR LUTHERAN DISASTER RESPONSE

In loving memory of faithful servants Jean and Ansel McNaight, our parents, by Jane Shearer and Anne B. McNaight.

In memory of Ronald A. Chambers and Kenneth E. Geedey by Deborah Chambers.

In memory of John and Helen Sieber and Martin and Ruth Varner by George and Kay Varner and family.

In memory of loved ones by Ray and Jane Miller.

In memory of Al McClure by Kay and Ken Eyler.

In memory of my husband, Daniel and in honor of my children, Tirzah, Chris and Nick by Tammy Brackbill.

In memory of Kenneth Geedey and Ron Chambers by Barbara Geedey.

In memory of Mr. and Mrs. F. Paul Smith and Mr. and Mrs. Kermit L. Witmer by David and Janet Smith.

In memory of my former students: Sam Brown, Kyle Knepp, Susan Hoffman Colyer, Allison McClure Garver, Tammy Pines Walton, Susan Huss Dare, Ryan Hackett, Randy Thompson, Michael Hockenberry, Jeffrey Marks, Antonio Wells, Bill Swartz, Jed Phelan, Zachary Pellman, Kathy Beaston, Jackie Gilliland Swartwood, Chip Jabs, and Sean Boyer by Cindy Van Gavree.

