

Bethany Evangelical Lutheran Church

200 Third Avenue, Altoona, PA + 814-944-7560

Christmas Eve Candlelight

The Nativity of Our Lord - December 24, 2011

Welcome! We are glad you have joined us for worship this night.

On a long winter evening we gather to proclaim the coming of the light. Isaiah announces that the people who walked in darkness have seen a great light. Paul reminds us that the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all. In the familiar account of Christ's birth, the evening sky is bright with the heavenly host singing, "Glory to God in the highest."

Amid our broken world we proclaim that the prince of peace is born among us. God comes to us in human flesh—in Christ's body and blood—so that we may be bearers of divine light to all the world.

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

THE PRELUDE:

CHOIR ANTHEM: "A Christmas Proclamation"

**We stand as we are able*

*WORDS OF WELCOME

P: The grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

C: And also with you.

***GATHERING HYMN:** "Hark The Herald Angels Sing"

ELW 270

*CALL TO WORSHIP AND ADVENT CANDLE LIGHTING

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

P: We gather to celebrate the birth of the one who is the light of the world.

C: We are here to worship God and his Son Jesus Christ, born this night in Bethlehem of Judea.

P: We light the candle of hope to remind us of the promises made by all the prophets that God would raise up a savior for his people Israel and through Him bless all the nations.

C: Let the heavens and the earth rejoice. Our Lord has come.

The first candle is lit

P: We light the candle of peace to remind us that the Prince of Peace comes to enlighten those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death.

C: Let the heavens and the earth rejoice. Our Lord has come.

P: Jesus Christ, eternal God, Son of the eternal Father, willing to hallow the world by his coming in mercy, was born of the virgin Mary in Bethlehem of Judea. Today is the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, God made flesh.

C: Thanks be to God.

* THE BLESSING

P: May you be filled with the wonder of Mary, the obedience of Joseph, the joy of the angels, the eagerness of the shepherds, and the peace of the Christ child. The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord's face shine on you with grace and mercy. The Lord look upon you with favor and + give you peace.

C: Amen

***THE SENDING HYMN** "Love Has Come"

ELW 292

*THE DISMISSAL

P: Go in peace. Share the good news of the birth of our Savior.

C: Thanks be to God.

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Christmas Day Worship will be held at 9:00 a.m. We will celebrate Christ's birth with a service of lessons and carols. We hope you will join us.

New Year's Day Worship will be held at 9:00 a.m. Come celebrate the New Year with us as we recommit ourselves to Christ's work in us for the sake of the world.

Blood Drive. Bethany will host a blood drive through the Central Blood Bank on Saturday, January 14 from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Bible Study will begin on January 17. We will be starting something new, so it's a great time to join us. We will meet in the chapel area at 6:45 p.m.

Thank you! Thank you to all the musicians, ushers, greeters, readers, acolytes, and helpers who helped to make this a special evening of worship to celebrate the season of Christ's birth. Your efforts are greatly appreciated.

HYMNS FOR MEDITATION:

*“What Child is This” First verse will be sung by Douglas Hutchison,
congregation joins on remaining verses*
“O Come All Ye Faithful”
“Infant Holy, Infant Lowly”
“It Came Upon A Midnight Clear”

ELW 296
ELW 283
ELW 276
ELW 282

We stand as we are able.

*POST COMMUNION BLESSING

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

C: Amen.

*PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

A: Let us pray. Great and Saving God,

C: **you have gathered your scattered people around gifts of grain and wine, the body and blood of our Savior 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.**

*CHRISTMAS CANDLE LIGHTING

Ushers come forward, receive their candles and a light from the assisting minister. The ushers move toward the rear of the church, up each aisle, lighting the candle of the person on the end. The light is passed on to the next person (ONLY unlit candles are tipped. Assist young children with candles).

While the congregation is lighting their candles, Emily Tompkins will present a liturgical dance based on the hymn Silent Night.

*CANDLE LIGHTING CAROL: “Silent Night, Holy Night!”

ELW 281

Mrs. Rebecca Twine will sing the first verse of Silent Night in German following which the congregation will sing the entire hymn

Individual candles are extinguished as the light in the Sanctuary comes on

*THE PROCLAMATION OF CHRIST’S BIRTH

P: Many ages after God created the heavens and the earth, when man and woman were formed in God's own image; long after the great flood, when God set the rainbow in the clouds as a sign of the covenant; twenty-one centuries from the time of Abraham and Sarah; thirteen centuries after Moses led God's people to freedom; eleven centuries from the time of Ruth and the judges; a thousand years from the anointing of David as king; in the sixty-fifth week as Daniel's prophecy takes note; in the one hundred and ninety-fourth Olympiad; the seven hundred and fifty-second year from the founding of the city of Rome; the forty-second year of the reign of Octavian Augustus; in the sixth age of the world, all earth being at peace,

The second candle is lit

P: We light the candle of joy to remind us that the Lord has made known his salvation and that grace is poured out upon us.

C: **Let the heavens and the earth rejoice. Our Lord has come.**

The third candle is lit

P: We light the candle of love to remind us that God so loved the world that he sent his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might have eternal life.

C: **Let the heavens and the earth rejoice. Our Lord has come.**

The fourth candle is lit

P: We light the Christ candle to celebrate and rejoice that the light of the world is born this night....

The Christ candle is lit

P: The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light. Those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness - on them a light has shined. You, O Lord, have multiplied the nation. You have increased its joy. For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given. And the government shall be upon his shoulder. He is called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.

C: **Glory be to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to all people of good will. Alleluia!**

*PRAYER OF THE DAY

A: Let us pray. Almighty God,

C: **you have made this night holy by the gift of your Son, born of the Spirit and of Mary. Let his light shine within our hearts even more brightly than it shines from the candles in this place. Help us to hear your word and to celebrate your everlasting love through Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.**

We are seated

HEARING THE GOOD NEWS OF CHRISTMAS IN GOD’S WORD

LUKE 1:26-38

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be.

The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. 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 ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?"

The angel said to 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 holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God."

Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

A: The Word of the Lord

C: **Thanks be to God.**

SPECIAL MUSIC: "Two French Carols" Featuring Heidi Bardelang and Asa Carns
We remain seated

LUKE 2:1-14

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.

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!"

A: The Word of the Lord

C: **Thanks be to God.**


SPECIAL MUSIC: *Bethany's Bell Choir*

LUKE 2:15-20

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us



1 O Lamb of God, you bear the sin of all the world a - way;
2 O Lamb of God, you bear the sin of all the world a - way;
3 O Lamb of God, you bear the sin of all the world a - way;



you suf-fered death our lives to save: have mer-cy now, we pray.
you set us free from guilt and grave: have mer-cy now, we pray.
e - ter-nal peace with God you made: give us your peace, we pray.

All are welcome at the Lord's Table! Whether you are a member of this church or a visitor, the Communion celebrated here is "open" to all baptized believers who trust that our Lord Jesus Christ—his true Body and his true Blood—is present for God's people in the Holy Communion. If you have a particular question please speak with the pastor before the service. Non-baptized believers (and youth who have not received the First Communion instruction) are invited to come forward and receive a blessing—all are welcome here!

Bethany's Communion Procedure

- 1) When directed by the usher, please come to the front left of the sanctuary. If you wish, please come to the rail and a communion cup will be given to you by the communion ministers. If you are unable to walk to and from the altar rail, please notify an usher and communion will be brought out to you.
- 2) Take an empty cup if you would like to receive wine or a pre-filled cup if you prefer grape juice.
- 3) Proceed to the kneeling rail - either kneel or bow your head reverently.
- 4) After you have communed, you may stay at the rail for as long as you wish. Please do not feel rushed by those around you. When you are ready, please return to your pew via the opposite aisle and be in prayer and quiet reflection or song as others commune.

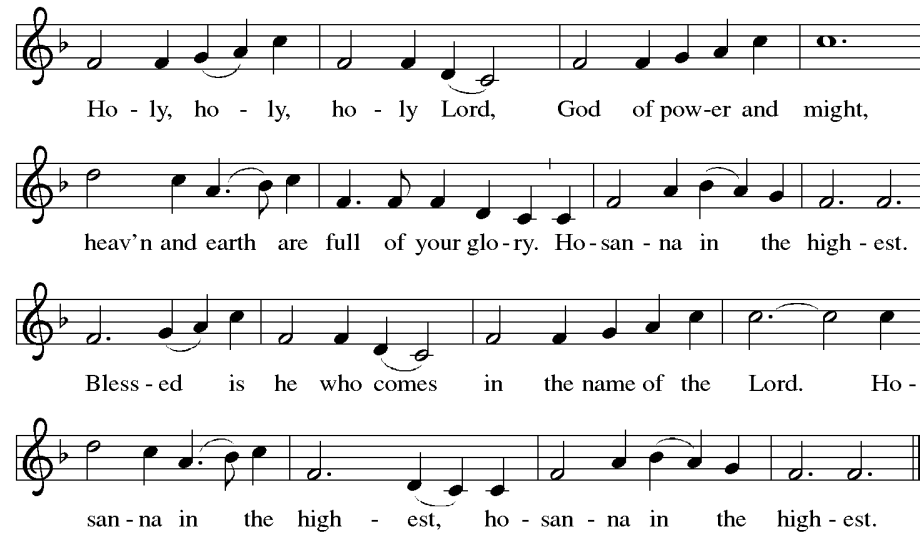
As you receive Holy Communion, the following is said:

P: The body of Christ, given for you.

C: **Amen.**

P: The blood of Christ, shed for you.

C: **Amen.**



Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow-er and might,
 heav'n and earth are full of your glo-ry. Ho-san - na in the high - est.
 Bless - ed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Ho -
 san - na in the high - est, ho - san - na in the high - est.

your name and join their unending hymn:

***EUCHARISTIC PRAYER AND WORDS OF INSTITUTION**

P: Holy One, the beginning and the end, the giver of life...

...Let us proclaim the mystery of faith

C: Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

P: With this bread and cup...one God now and forever

C: Amen.

***THE LORD'S PRAYER**

P: Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus keeps teaching us:

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.

***THE INVITATION TO COMMUNION**

P: The bread of God comes down from heaven and gives life to the world. Come, eat, and live.

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.

A: The Word of the Lord

C: Thanks be to God.

Kid's time

SERMON

We stand as we are able

***HYMN OF THE DAY: "Away In A Manger"**

ELW 277

***THE NICENE CREED**

P: Let us confess our faith together using the words of the Nicene Creed:

C: 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 man. 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.

***CHRISTMAS PRAYER**

A: Let us affirm the love that God has for us- a love that was not, and cannot, be hindered.

C: We thank God for coming unto us; we praise him for Christ's birth into our world.

A: It was cold and Mary and Joseph were fearful.

C: But that did not stop the birth.

A: They were poor and had no place fitting for their child.

C: But that did not stop the birth.

A: They were uncertain about what God wanted from them.

C: But that did not stop the birth.

A: And today we are still sometimes cold and fearful, certainly poor in many ways.

C: We often feel that we have no place and are unclear about what God wants of us.

A: But these things did not stop the birth of Jesus then, nor will they do it now. To all who are open to God's leading, He comes.

C: Lord Jesus be born in us tonight. Amen.

We are seated

OFFERING

"Hallelujah, Light Has Come" Duet by Arianne Hoffman and Emily Tompkins

We stand as we are able

*OFFERTORY



Let the vine - yards be fruit - ful, Lord, and fill to the brim our cup of



bles - ing. Gath - er a har - vest from the seeds that were sown, that we may be



fed with the bread of life. Gath - er the hopes and the dreams of all; u -



nite them with the prayers we of - fer now. Grace our ta - ble with your



pres - ence, and give us a fore - taste of the feast to come.

*OFFERING PRAYER

A: Let us pray. Loving God,

C: like Mary and Joseph, who trusted in your grace despite their fear, their poverty, their lack of certainty, we offer ourselves and our gifts to you. Bless our offering and hallow our every thought and action, that Christ may be born in us and through us be revealed to those who yet walk in darkness. Amen.

THE CELEBRATION OF HOLY COMMUNION

*CHRISTMAS CONFESSION

P: We confess the many things that stand in the way of true celebration of God's love.

C: We confess those things in our lives that have caused us to become separated from God, our neighbors, and ourselves

P: Let us approach the throne of grace with repentant hearts.

A brief silence is kept

P: Faithful God,

C: we confess that we have been unfaithful to you. Like dry leaves and withered grass, our lives are blown about by our sins and the powers of evil around us. Restore us, O God; let the light of your face shine on us, and we shall be saved. Amen.

P: God is patient, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance. In the name of + Jesus Christ, I bring you this good news: You are free from all that imprisons you; your sins are forgiven; God heals your broken hearts. Live in peace and harmony as you wait for the day of God.

C: Amen.

*THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

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 our thanks and praise.

THE PREFACE

P: It is indeed right, our duty and our joy, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God, through our Savior Jesus Christ. You comforted your people with the promise of the Redeemer, through whom you will also make all things new in the day when he comes to judge the world in righteousness. And so, with all the choirs of angels, with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven, we praise