

Welcome to
Luther Memorial Church
of the Erie Lutheran Parish



25 DECEMBER 2023
The Nativity of Our Lord, Christmas Day
10:30 am

As on the first day of creation, on this Christmas Day the Word illumines the world, shining forth to bring all things into being. Today we celebrate the incarnate Word, God becoming flesh to live among us in the person of Jesus Christ then and now. Emboldened by the good news of Christ's birth, along with the shepherds, Mary and Joseph, and all witnesses to the light of Christ, we declare to the world that we have indeed seen and been transformed by the arrival of "the salvation of our God." O come, let us adore!

LUTHER MEMORIAL CHURCH

LUTHER MEMORIAL ACADEMY

225 West Tenth Street • Erie, PA 16501 • 814-454-0106

REV. JAY C. MITCHELL, *Pastor*

WALT GABER

Cantor

RON KING

Pastoral Asst. ~ Holy Trinity

THE REV. BRIAN MORAN

THE REV. KAREN LUNDWALL

THE REV. KAREN PARSH

THE REV. GAIL ZACKRISON

Pastors in Residence

LINDA GRAFFIUS, RN

Director of Care & Health Ministries

JAN MACINNES

Care Ministry

BETH KELLER

SARAH PRYLINSKI

Youth and Family Ministry

MICHELLE THOM

Academy Administrator

25 DECEMBER 2023

THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD, CHRISTMAS DAY

Holy Communion • ELW – Setting IV • 10:30

GATHERING – “The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God.”

PRELUDE – "From Heaven Above to Earth I Come"

"Of the Father's Love Begotten"

"Good Christian Friends, Rejoice!"

Johann Pachelbel

Wilbur Held

Larry Visser

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

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

P Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God,
the Word made flesh,
our life and our salvation.

C Amen.

P Trusting the goodness and lovingkindness of God our Savior,
let us confess our sin.

Silence is kept for reflection.

P God of life,

C you promise good news of great joy for all people,
and call us to be messengers of your peace.

**We confess that too often we hoard our joy,
our resources, and our security.**

We nurture conflict and build barriers.

**We neglect the needs of our neighbors
and ignore the groaning of creation.**

Have mercy on us.

Where we are self-centered, open our hearts.

Where we are reluctant, give us courage.

Where we are cynical, restore our trust.

Renew us with your grace

and give us again the hope of eternal life in you.

Amen.



- P** Hear the good news:
 We are children of God and heirs of God's promises
 through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.
 In † Jesus we are forgiven and redeemed.
 Sing with joy, for all the ends of the earth shall know the salvation of God.

C Amen.

Text and melody for this hymn are the work of Martin Luther. Text for the first stanza was borrowed, with meaningful alteration, from a popular secular song of the time. The tune was used by J. S. Bach in the Christmas Oratorio as well as several organ works.

ENTRANCE HYMN

From Heaven Above

ELW 268

1 "From heav'n a - bove to earth I come to bear good
 2 "To you this night is born a child of Mar - y,
 3 "This is the Christ, God's Son most high, who hears your

news to ev - 'ry home! Glad tid - ings of great joy I
 cho - sen vir - gin mild; this new - born child of low - ly
 sad and bit - ter cry, who will him - self your Sav - ior

bring to all the world, and glad - ly sing:
 birth shall be the joy of all the earth.
 be and from all sin will set you free."

4 "The blessing that the Father planned
 the Son holds in his infant hand,
 that in his kingdom, bright and fair,
 you may with us his glory share."

5 "These are the signs that you will see
 to let you know that it is he:
 in manger-bed, in swaddling clothes
 the child who all the earth upholds."

Text: Martin Luther, 1483–1546; tr. *Lutheran Book of Worship*
 Music: VOM HIMMEL HOCH, attr. Martin Luther; V. Schumann, *Geistliche Lieder*, 1539
 Text © 1978 *Lutheran Book of Worship*, admin. Augsburg Fortress.

GREETING

- P** Glory to God in the highest!
C And peace to God's people on earth!
P The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.
C And also with you.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

- P** Let us pray.
 Almighty God, you gave us your only Son to take on our human nature and to illumine the world with your light. By your grace adopt us as your children and enlighten us with your Spirit, through Jesus Christ, our Redeemer and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
C Amen.

Please be seated.

WORD – “God speaks to us in Scripture reading, preaching and song.”

This reading from the Wisdom of Solomon, a deuterocanonical book of the Bible, echoes language of creation, of Proverbs 7’s story of Woman Wisdom (Sophia), and also of the Prologue of John’s Gospel.

It envisions Woman Wisdom at God’s side as the helper and actor in the creation.

This is the same way John envisions the Word (Logos) who we celebrate as made flesh this day. In many ancient texts of the Church, Jesus is seen as the embodiment of Sophia. Whether we celebrate Jesus as Sophia or Logos we celebrate today the birthday of the One who has been from everlasting.

FIRST READING: Wisdom of Solomon 9:1-6, 9-11

¹“O God of my ancestors and Author of mercy, who have made all things by your word, ²and by your wisdom have formed humankind to govern the creatures you have made, ³and oversee the world in holiness and righteousness, and render judgment as the soul of righteousness, and render judgment as the soul of righteousness: ⁴Give me the wisdom that sits by your throne, and do not reject me from among your children. ⁵For I am your slave, the child of your slave girl, one who is weak and short-lived, with little understanding of judgment and laws; ⁶for even one who is perfect among human beings will be regarded as nothing without the wisdom that comes from you. ⁹With you is Wisdom, she who knows your works and was present when you made the world; she knows what is pleasing in your sight and what is right according to your commandments. ¹⁰Send her forth from the holy heavens, and from your throne of glory send her, that she may labor with me, and that I may learn what is pleasing to you. ¹¹For she knows and understands all things, and she will guide me wisely in my actions and guard me with her glory.”

☐ The Word is made flesh.

☑ Thanks be to God.

Please stand as you are able to greet the Gospel.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

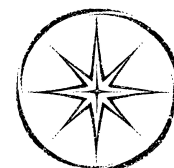
ELW 268

From Heaven Above

6 Now let us all with joy - ful cheer go with the
7 Look, look, dear friends, look o - ver there! What lies with -

shep - herds and draw near to see this won - drous gift of
in that man - ger bare? Who is that love - ly lit - tle

God, the bless - ed child to us be - stowed.
one? The ba - by Je - sus, God's_ dear Son.



☐ The Holy Gospel according to John.

☑ **Glory to you, O Lord.**

The prologue to the Gospel of John describes Jesus as the Word of God made flesh, the one who reveals God to be “full of grace and truth.”

GOSPEL: John 1:1-14

¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²The Word was in the beginning with God. ³All things came into being through the Word, without whom not one thing came into being. What has come into being in the Word was life, and the life was the light of all people. ⁵The light shines in the bleakness, and the bleakness did not overtake 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. ⁸John himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. ⁹The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. ¹⁰The light 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 a 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 child, full of grace and truth.

☐ The Gospel of the Lord.

☑ **Praise to you, O Christ.**

GRADUAL

ELW 268

From Heaven Above

8 Wel-come to earth, O no - ble Guest, through whom this
9 O Lord, you have cre - at - ed all! How did you
sin - ful world is blest! You turned not from our needs a -
come to be so small, to sweet - ly sleep in man - ger -
way; how can our thanks such love re - pay?
bed where low - ing cat - tle late - ly fed?

Please be seated.

HOMILY

Pastor Jay

Please stand as you are able to proclaim the Word of God in song.

Seldom has the wonder of the Incarnation been expressed so beautifully as in this text, created in the era when the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds were being codified and mindful of similar theological affirmations. It is set here to a plainchant melody from the late Middle Ages.

HYMN OF THE DAY

ELW 295

Of the Father's Love Begotten



1 Of the Fa - ther's love be - got - ten ere the worlds be -
 2 Oh, that birth for - ev - er bless - ed, when the vir - gin,
 3 This is he whom seers in old time chant - ed of with
 4 Let the heights of heav'n a - dore him; an - gel hosts, his
 5 Christ, to thee, with God the Fa - ther, and, O Ho - ly



gan to be, he is Al - pha and O - me - ga,
 full of grace, by the Ho - ly Ghost con - ceiv - ing,
 one ac - cord, whom the voic - es of the proph - ets
 prais - es sing; pow'rs, do - min - ions, bow be - fore him
 Ghost, to thee, hymn and chant and high thanks - giv - ing



he the source, the end - ing he, of the things that are, that
 bore the Sav - ior of our race, and the babe, the world's re -
 prom - ised in their faith - ful word; now he shines, the long - ex -
 and ex - tol our God and King; let no tongue on earth be
 and un - wea - ried prais - es be: hon - or, glo - ry, and do -



have been, and that fu - ture years shall see,
 deem - er, first re - vealed his sa - cred face,
 pect - ed; let cre - a - tion praise its Lord
 si - lent, ev - 'ry voice in con - cert ring
 min - ion, and e - ter - nal vic - to - ry



ev - er - more and ev - er - more.
 ev - er - more and ev - er - more.
 ev - er - more and ev - er - more.
 ev - er - more and ev - er - more.
 ev - er - more and ev - er - more! A - men.

Text: Marcus Aurelius Clemens Prudentius, 348-413; tr. composite
 Music: DIVINUM MYSTERIUM, plainsong mode V, 13th cent.

NICENE CREED

☐ Siblings in Christ, as we ponder the infinite God entering our finite world, let us confess the faith of the Church:

☑ **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.**

THE PRAYERS

P With shepherds and angels, we lift our voices to God for the Church, those in need, and all of God's good creation:

A brief silence.

P Word Incarnate, your song has been sung from everlasting. Inspire your Church to continue the song so that we may sing your praise, tell of your glory, and ponder your dwelling among us. Make us faithful witnesses of your presence among us: O Word of God Made Flesh:

C **make your dwelling here.**

P Word of Justice, we pray for all who rule, govern or lead: give them hearts full of compassion, justice, and peace. Grant lasting peace to those places where bombs sound a lullaby; particularly Palestine and Israel, Ukraine and Russia. Make us your peacemakers in our time: O Word of God Made Flesh:

C **make your dwelling here.**

P Word of Creation, we pray for your earth. Accompany us in darker nights and colder days, comfort all who seek shelter from the weather, and empower those who work for clean water and abundant food for all. Make us grateful and generous stewards of your whole earth: O Word of God Made Flesh:

C **make your dwelling here.**

P Word of Healing, we pray for the sick and suffering. Grant your wholeness to those we name now: _____. Uphold those who care for others, grant wisdom and understanding to those who share your gifts of science and medicine, and bless those who will die this day. Make us signs of your wholeness and grace: O Word of God Made Flesh:

C **make your dwelling here.**



P Word of Hope, we pray for the lonely, the forgotten, and those who have no one to pray for them. Shine your holy light into the lives of those who do not find joy in this season and those who cannot look with hope to your coming. Encourage those who wonder, watch, and wait. Make us signs of your love: O Word of God Made Flesh:

C **make your dwelling here.**

P Holy Word of Promise, we give you thanks for all who have gone before us in lives of faith and holy living. Sustain us with your promises until we come with Mary, Joseph, Shepherds, and Angels to worship the Prince of Peace. Make us one in the promises of baptism: O Word of God Made Flesh:

C **make your dwelling here.**

P Into your wounded hands of love, Eternal God, we place all our prayers trusting in the mercy and grace of your Word made Flesh this day, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

C **Amen.**

P The peace of the Christ Child be with you always.

C **And also with you.**

We greet one another with a sign of peace.

As you share the peace with one another, you are invited to gather around the altar.

Bring your bulletin with you.

MEAL – “God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ.”

OFFERTORY PRAYER

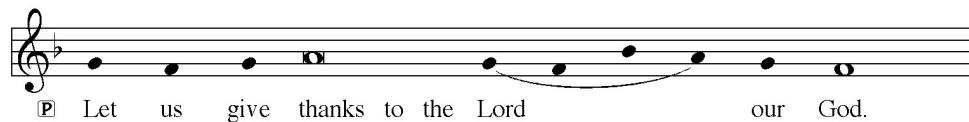
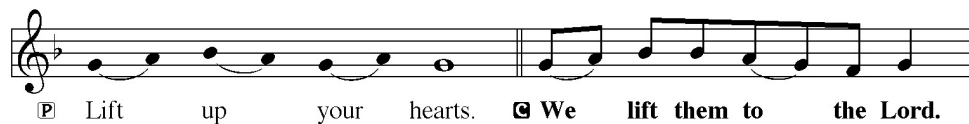
P God of abundance, receive and bless these gifts we have offered.

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.**

GREAT THANKSGIVING DIALOG



P It is indeed right, our duty and our joy...we praise your name and join their unending hymn: ▶



Sing ho-ly, ho-ly, ho - ly Lord God of pow'r and might,—



Heav'n and earth your glo - ry show, Ho - san - na in the high - est,



Bless-ed is the one who comes in the name_ of the Lord. Ho -



san - na in the heights!— Ho - san - na in the heights!

EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER

P We sing a new song to you, O God of our salvation, for you have done marvelous things. Since the beginning of time, you have spoken your Word, and your light shines in our darkness. Glory to you, O God:

C **Glory in the highest!**

P The seas are thundering with praise, the rivers are clapping their hands. The hills ring out with gladness, and the trees are shouting their joy. Glory to you, O God:

C **Glory in the highest!**

P Your Son rules in truth and justice, victorious and merciful is he! We praise your majesty lying in a manger, Jesus Christ, born of Mary and lauded by angels. Glory to you, O God:

C **Glory in the highest!**

*On the night before he died, 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.*

P Send your Spirit on us and on this meal of wonder. In this bread, give us the body of Christ. With this cup, reveal the grace of your risen Son. Make known to the whole earth your steadfast love. Glory to you, O God:

C **Glory in the highest!**

P In these dark days, bring the dawn of your righteousness to birth. Hold the living and the dead in your hands. In your good time, awaken the sleeping animals, and revive the dormant plants with your life-giving Spirit. Glory to you, O God:

C **Glory in the highest!**



P With trumpets and horns and harps, with the faithful on earth and the hosts of heaven, we sing to your splendor, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, God Most High, Light of the earth, and Judge of the world, today and forever.

C Amen.

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

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

P Here is Jesus, the Prince of Peace. Come, taste and see!

C Amen.

P Those communing at home: take and eat, the body and blood of Christ given and shed for you.

The congregation is seated.

COMMUNION DISTRIBUTION

Today's service is a celebration of Holy Communion. We believe that Jesus Christ is truly present in the gifts of bread and wine, bringing forgiveness of sins and new life to all who receive this sacrament. All baptized Christians who come at our Lord's invitation are welcome at His table of grace.

Please come forward by the center aisle.

Take a small empty cup from the trays at the head of the center aisle.

*Prefilled cups with white grape juice for those who prefer it
are located in the tray on the stand in front of the baptismal font.*

Gluten-free wafers are also on the stand in the dish on top of the tray.

Receive the bread and wine and return to your place by the side aisle.

*If you are not going to receive Holy Communion, but would like to receive a blessing,
please come forward with your arms crossed over your chest.*

From Heaven Above

10 Were earth a thou - sand times as fair and set with
 11 For vel - vets soft and silk - en stuff you have but
 12 Ah, dear - est Je - sus, ho - ly child, pre - pare a
 13 My heart for ve - ry joy now leaps; my voice no

gold and jew - els rare, still such a crad - le would not
 hay and straw so rough on which as king so rich and
 bed, soft, un - de - filed, a qui - et cham - ber in my
 long - er si - lence keeps; I too must sing with joy - ful

do to rock a prince so great as you.
 great to be en - throned in hum - ble state.
 heart, that you and I may nev - er part.
 tongue the sweet - est an - cient cra - dle - song;

Not much is known about this author, but in this hymn he has offered an accompaniment that captures the charm of the 16th-century French carol, “Bring a Torch, Jeanette, Isabella”. This hymn is a blend of old world and new.

ELW 292

Love Has Come

1 Love has come— a light in the dark - ness! Love shines forth in the
 2 Love is born! Come, share in the won - der. Love is God now a -
 3 Love has come and nev - er will leave us! Love is life ev - er -

Beth - le - hem skies. See, all heav - en has come to pro - claim it;
 sleep in the hay. See the glow in the eyes of his moth - er;
 last - ing and free. Love is Je - sus with - in and a - mong us.

hear how their song of joy a - ris - es; Love! Love! Born un - to
 what is the name her heart is say - ing? Love! Love! Love is the
 Love is the peace our hearts are seek - ing. Love! Love! Love is the

you, a Sav - ior! Love! Love! Glo - ry to God on high.
 name she whis - pers; Love! Love! Je - sus, Im - man - u - el.
 gift of Christ - mas. Love! Love! Praise to you, God on high!

Text: Ken Bible, b. 1950

Music: UN FLAMBEAU, F. Seguin, *Recueil de noëls composés en langue provençale*, 1856

Text © 1996 Integrity's Hosanna! Music (ASCAP), c/o Integrity Media, Inc., 1000 Cody Road, Mobile, AL 36695.

Please stand as you are able.

TABLE BLESSING

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

☑ Amen.

POST-COMMUNION CANTICLE

ELW 268

From Heaven Above

14 "Glo - ry to God in high - est heav'n, who un - to
us the Son has giv'n." With an - gels sing in pi - ous
mirth a glad new year to all the earth.

POST-COMMUNION PRAYER

☐ 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.

☑ Amen.

SENDING – “God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world.”

BLESSING

☐ ...and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the + Son, and the Holy Spirit be upon you now and always.

☑ Amen.

Text and tune of this carol have come down from medieval ages together.

The earliest Lutheran version appeared in a volume produced by a Wittenberg publisher and edited by Martin Luther. A slightly later version contained texts in both German and Swedish.

SENDING HYMN

ELW 288

Good Christian Friends, Rejoice

1 Good Chris - tian friends, re - joice with heart and soul and voice;
2 Good Chris - tian friends, re - joice with heart and soul and voice;
3 Good Chris - tian friends, re - joice with heart and soul and voice;

give ye heed to what we say: Je - sus Christ is born to - day;
 now ye hear of end - less bliss: Je - sus Christ was born for this!
 now ye need not fear the grave; Je - sus Christ was born to save!

ox and ass be - fore him bow, and he is in the man - ger now.
 He has o - pened heav - en's door, and we are blest for - ev - er - more.
 Calls you one and calls you all to gain the ev - er - last - ing hall.

Christ is born to - day! Christ is born to - day!
 Christ was born for this! Christ was born for this!
 Christ was born to save! Christ was born to save!

Text: Medieval Latin carol; tr. John Mason Neale, 1818–1866
 Music: IN DULCI JUBILO, German carol, 14th cent.; arr. Robert L. Pearsall, 1795–1856

DISMISSAL INTO THE WORLD FOR SERVICE

- P** Glory to God in the highest!
- C** And peace to God's people on earth!
- P** Go in peace. Tell the Good News!
- C** Thanks be to God.

POSTLUDE – "Good Christian Friends, Rejoice!"

J. S. Bach

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Today's Events

Altar flowers are given to the Glory of God and in memory of loved ones by Carol Schaal.

A fellowship time of Prosecco and Panettone will be offered in the parlor following this morning's service. Thank you to the Mitchell family for this Christmas gathering.

Offering envelopes for 2024 are located on the table by the ramp door. To save on postage we ask that you please pick up your envelopes. They are arranged alphabetically. Thank you.

Desk calendars for 2024, compliments of the Burton Quinn-Scott Funeral Home, are located at the welcome tables. Please pick up as many as you need for the coming year.

Christmas Office Hours

The Church Office will be on limited hours this week as our staff celebrates with their families. Please be patient with all correspondence and we will get back to you as soon as we can. The Office is open on Tuesday, January 2 with normal hours.

Worship

The Eucharistic Prayer is another composition of Dr. Gail Ramshaw, liturgical scholar. This Eucharistic Prayer echoes Luke 2, John 1, and the psalms appointed for Christmas: 96, 97, and 98. Given the proximity of Christmas to the Northern Hemisphere's winter solstice, it also prays for the coming of spring.

About the cover icon: Red Letter Christians partnered with artist Kelly Latimore to create this new icon, "Christ in the Rubble," which illustrates the prophetic message that if Jesus was born today, he would be born "under the rubble." Kelly wants his art to be a 'holy pondering' - a process that potentially brings about a new way of seeing. Our hope is that this icon, "Christ in the Rubble", will create more dialogue among Christians in the United States during this holy season about the ways our beliefs and actions - or lack thereof - contribute to the violence we're currently witnessing in Gaza. How can we shape a culture of Christianity where love truly has no boundaries? How do we create a world where our poor, homeless, refugee, Palestinian Savior - born to a teenage mother and later condemned to death - would be cherished had he been born today.

Epiphany Service

All are welcome to attend the **Erie Conference Epiphany Service with Burning of the Greens** which will be held Saturday, January 6, 2024, 6:00 p.m. at Faith Lutheran Church, 5414 East Lake Road. Celebrate the Epiphany of our Lord together with a candlelight Eucharist, with Pastor Jay Mitchell preaching, followed by an outdoor burning of the Christmas greens. The Scandinavian custom of an Epiphany burning of the greens was introduced to Faith Lutheran by Pastor David Laakso; it has become a beloved local tradition. Refreshments and fellowship will follow in the social hall. Dress warm for the bonfire; you may also watch from the comfort of the social hall if you prefer. A simple house blessing liturgy will be available to take and use at home this Epiphany season. If you would like to bring Christmas trees or greens from home to add to the bonfire, please contact Faith Lutheran Church to let them know.

Items to Note

In case of an emergency and unable to reach Pastor Jay, please contact our church office at 454-0106, ext. 221 during weekday business hours of 8:00am – 4:00pm to speak with Norma. During the weekend and evening you are welcome to contact Norma Buerk at 450-7162 or Linda Graffius at 440-5458. Thank you.



CALENDAR

MONDAY, DECEMBER 26 Church Offices and LMA Closed
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 27 LMA Closed
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 28 LMA Closed
THURSDAY, DECEMBER 29 LMA Closed
FRIDAY, DECEMBER 30 Church Offices and LMA Closed
SATURDAY, DECEMBER 31

**SUNDAY, DECEMBER 31, 2023
 THE FIRST SUNDAY OF CHRISTMAS**

Worship with us at 8:15am in Faith Chapel or 10:30am in the main church.

| SUNDAY, DECEMBER 31, 2023 | | |
|----------------------------------|---------|-----------------|
| ASSISTING IN WORSHIP | | |
| Assisting Minister | 8:15am | Rob Benacci |
| | 10:30am | Pat Bellingham |
| Altar Guild | 8:15am | Nancy Benacci |
| | 10:30am | Pam Masiroff |
| Greeters | 8:15am | Vicky Blasco |
| | 10:30am | Stan Rose |
| Counters | 10:30am | |
| Video Streaming | 10:30am | Sarah Prylinski |
| Ushers | 10:30am | |

— PRAYER LIST —

| PLEASE REMEMBER IN YOUR PRAYERS: | | | |
|--|------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|
| Our Members: | | | |
| Lois Fobes | Dave Parsh | Ann Flick | Rose-Marie Rose |
| Pat Gilbert | Phil McAfee | Cyndi Treiber | |
| Friends and Family: | | | |
| Mitchell & family | Jean C. | Jeannette Bowers | Ian Minner |
| Carol E. | John Semonis | Jeff Granger & family | Nick |
| Paul Gustafson | Melissa | Jim Berger | Jane Rose |
| Allison, Audree & family | Melissa Pierce | Scot & Robin | Mark Hadzega |
| Cindy B. | Scott Coleman | Suzie Hosterman | Dick Braendel |
| Doug & Jenine | Doug Blum | Bella Poof | Lorraine Melms |
| Melanie Benn | Jonah Allgeier | Nancy Varner | |
| Grief: | | | |
| Bob Michel family | | | |
| Our Military Service Men & Women: | | | |
| Lt. Col. Matt Anderson | Michael Stickner | Andrew Watson | Alli Brown |
| Ben Dixon | | | |

READINGS AND COMMEMORATIONS FOR THE 12 DAYS OF CHRISTMAS

December 25 – The Nativity of Our Lord, Christmas Day – Isaiah 52:7-10; Psalm 98; Hebrews 1:1-12; John 1:1-14 -- *As on the first day of creation, on this Christmas Day the Word illumines the world, shining forth to bring all things into being. Today we celebrate the incarnate Word, God becoming flesh to live among us in the person of Jesus Christ then and now. Emboldened by the good news of Christ's birth, along with the shepherds, Mary and Joseph, and all witnesses to the light of Christ, we declare to the world that we have indeed seen and been transformed by the arrival of "the salvation of our God." O come, let us adore!*

A Note from Pastor Jay: The three days that follow our celebrations of Jesus' birth are the feasts of the three "**Christmas martyrs.**" As we celebrate Jesus present on earth and what it means to be called to be disciples and witnesses (martyrion in Greek) of what he means in our lives, we contemplate the three kinds of martyrdom:

Stephen was a martyr of will and deed: He witnessed to Jesus and knew it could get him killed. He witnessed anyway. And he was killed for his witness.

John the Divine was a martyr of will but not of deed: He is believed to be the only one of the original 12 disciples to die of natural causes (though there are stories of his being spared of martyrdom on several accounts). This fulfills the Gospel of John when Jesus says, "If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you?". He witnessed to Jesus knowing he could be killed. He witnessed anyway. He died of natural causes, though by tradition in exile on the isle of Patmos.

The Holy Innocents were martyrs of deed but not of will: Killed by order of King Herod who feared the birth of the "King of the Judeans" in Bethlehem, they did not witness to Jesus but were killed for his sake nevertheless.

December 26 – Stephen, Deacon and Protomartyr – II Chronicles 24:17-22; Psalm 17:1-9, 15; Acts 6:8-7:2a, 51-60; Matthew 23:34-39 -- *Stephen was a deacon and the first martyr (protomartyr) of the church. He was one of those seven upon whom the apostles laid hands after they had been chosen to serve widows and others in need. Later, Stephen's preaching angered the temple authorities, and they ordered him to be put to death by stoning.*

December 27 – St John the Divine, Evangelist – Genesis 1:1-5, 26-31; Psalm 116:12-19; I John 1:1-2:2; John 21:20-25 -- *The son of Zebedee and brother of James, John was one of the twelve disciples and witness to the transfiguration. Tradition has named him also the writer of the Gospel of John, the three New Testament letters bearing his name, as well as Revelation.*

December 28 – The Holy Innocents of Bethlehem, martyrs – Jeremiah 31:15-17; Psalm 124; I Peter 4:12-19; Matthew 2:13-18 -- *This day commemorates the young children killed by Herod in Bethlehem in his jealous attempt to murder the baby Jesus, a sobering reminder of the evil that led Christ to be born for our salvation.*

December 29 – Psalm 148; Isaiah 49:5-15; Matthew 12:46-50

December 30 – Psalm 148; Proverbs 9:1-12; II Peter 3:8-13

December 31 – Psalm 148; I Kings 3:5-14; John 8:12-19

January 1 – The Holy Name of Jesus – Number 6:22-27; Psalm 8; Galatians 4:4-7; Philippians 2:5-11; Luke 2:15-21 -- *By Jewish law, every baby boy was circumcised and named on the eighth day of life, so on the eighth day of Christmas the church celebrates this event in Jesus' life. The keeping of the covenant as well as Jesus' name are signs of God's salvation given to us through him.*

January 2 – Psalm 110; Proverbs 1:1-7; James 3:13-18

January 3 – Psalm 110; Proverbs 1:20-33; James 4:1-10

January 4 – Psalm 110; Proverbs 3:1-12; James 4:11-7

January 5 – Psalm 110; Proverbs 22:1-9; Luke 6:27-31

January 6 – The Epiphany of Jesus – Isaiah 60:1-6; Psalm 72:1-7, 10-14; Ephesians 3:1-12; Matthew 2:1-12 -- *The feast of Epiphany ("manifestation") concludes the Christmas season with a celebration of God's glory revealed in the person of Jesus Christ. In Isaiah and Ephesians, that glory is proclaimed for all nations and people. Like the light of the star that guided the magi to Jesus, the light of Christ reveals who we are: children of God who are claimed and washed in the waters of baptism. We are sent out to be beacons of the light of Christ, sharing the good news of God's love to all people.*