



Christmas Eve

OUR SAVIOR  
LUTHERAN CHURCH

Christmas Eve at Home  
Thursday, December 24, 2020



**OUR SAVIOR LUTHERAN CHURCH**  
745 Front Street S., Issaquah, WA 98027  
425-392-4169

## SERVICE OF THE WORD: CHRISTMAS EVE

### GATHERING: THE HOLY SPIRIT CALLS US TOGETHER AS THE PEOPLE OF GOD.

#### GATHERING CAROL

*O Come, All Ye Faithful*

Congregation

attr. John Francis Wade, 1711-1786

O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant!

O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem!

Come and behold him, born the King of angels;

*O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,*

*O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord!*

Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation,

Sing, all ye citizens of heav'n above!

Glory to God in the highest:

Yea, Lord, we greet thee, born this happy morning;

Jesus, to thee be glory giv'n!

Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing:

#### WELCOME

Pastor Jim Kruse

#### GREETING

PM: Blessed be the holy Trinity, + one God,  
the Maker of heaven and earth,  
the Word made flesh,  
the Lord and giver of life.

Today Christ is born: Alleluia, alleluia!

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.**

#### CAROL

*Good Christian Friends, Rejoice* — German carol; arr. Jason W. Krug

Memorial Bells

#### PRAYER OF THE DAY

PM: Let us pray. Almighty God,

**C: you made this holy night shine with the brightness of the true Light. Grant that here on earth we may walk in the light of Jesus' presence and in the last day wake to the brightness of his glory; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.**

**FIRST LESSON**

Isaiah 9:2-7

**CAROL***Carol of the Manger* — English carol; arr. Gordon Hafso

Lori Downey

Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,  
 The little Lord Jesus lay down His sweet head;  
 The stars in the bright sky look'd down where he lay,  
 The little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.

The cattle are lowing, the poor baby wakes,  
 But little Lord Jesus no crying he makes.  
 I love thee, Lord Jesus, look down from the sky,  
 And stay by my cradle to watch lullaby

Be near me, Lord Jesus; I ask thee to stay  
 Close by me forever, and love me, I pray.  
 Bless all the dear children in thy tender care,  
 And fit us for heaven, to live with thee there.

**SECOND LESSON**

Titus 3:4-7

**CAROL***Bring a Torch, Jeanette, Isabella* — French carol; arr. Donna Gartman Schultz

Jan Hazelton, Jiyoung Lee

**THE GOSPEL**

Luke 2:1-20

**SERMON***The Bedlam of Bethlehem*

Pastor Jim Kruse

I am realizing, as I stand in this place tonight, that I do not have the power of imagination to conjure up what this place was like one year ago tonight. I look at these empty pews and I try to think back, “Was this place full of people, young and old, freshly scrubbed and finely dressed, or was only half-way full? Was it a clear, quiet, peaceful night, or was it overcast, cold, or rainy? Were the folks who were here at ease with the spirit of the times, happy to have gathered with family (some after traveling a great distance), eagerly awaiting an evening meal or exchange of gifts at the house? Or was there an uneasy spirit under the surface, worry about the chances and changes of life and the uncertainty of the new year and new decade ahead? Did we sing the carols with gusto and confidence, or simply go through the motions? It was my first Christmas Eve at Our Savior. And, for the life of me, I cannot recall it, as hard as I try.

It is not time, or unfamiliarity, however, that is the problem. It is the piles and piles, mountains really, of the events of life that are blocking the view. A worldwide pandemic swept across our lives, taking jobs and lives and freedom of moving about with it. Racial tensions flared and protests spilled into the streets. We conducted a deeply divisive presidential election like none before it, that is still festering nearly 2 months later. When can we travel again? When can we hug again? When can we party in restaurants again? When can we comfort the dying again? When can we kneel at this railing shoulder to shoulder again? But, when it is over, if it is ever over, will any of it even matter the way it once did?

It is against this backdrop of uncertainty and chaos and pain and confusion and loss, that we are doing our best to bring to life in the imagination of our hearts the Little Town of

Bethlehem, where God stepped into God's creation as a new born human being. It is not so much the real Bethlehem of Judea, the small hillside village of peasants just outside of Jerusalem, 2,000 years ago. But rather, we are searching for the Bethlehem as we have always wanted it to be. The Bethlehem that lives up to its name, "Beth-lehem," or "House of bread." That is, the place in this world where God feeds God's people what they need for life. We are looking for the Bethlehem of gentle assurance, grace, peace, and comfort that we have always needed it to be—the part of Christmas we can bring to mind when we need to know, "It is going to be OK!"

Believe it or not, the story that I just read to you a few minutes ago, the story of Christmas, is one of the wildest, most chaotic stories you will ever hear. It is a story about a government that has turned the lives of its people upside down with orders that they must pick up their lives, in whatever corner of the land they are living, and return to the city of their birth to be counted and taxed. It is the story about two common peasants, Mary, a young girl who is traveling by foot for several days during the last days of her pregnancy, and her new husband Joseph. Together they are traveling to Bethlehem, an insignificant little village in the hills south of Jerusalem. And when they arrived, they have to squeeze themselves into an animal barn, because it is the only shelter they can find. Suddenly Mary goes into labor and gives birth to a baby, whom they lovingly wrap up strips of cloth and cradle in the hay that fills the feeding trough in the barn.

All of that would be chaotic enough, but this is only the beginning of this wild night. We are told that sometime in the middle of the night the skies open up in a field outside of town. And angels break through, singing songs of praise above the heads of shepherds who are taking care of their sheep. Filled with fear, one of the angels tells the shepherds about this birth, and that the baby it is God herself who has entered into the world in human form. The surprised shepherds leave their sheep in the field without protection, and go stumbling into town to find the new child. One can only imagine the trouble they caused as they went poking their heads into every open door and window as they move through the town by the light of the moon and stars.

If we were to listen to this story as though it is new to us tonight, we would soon discover that this town of Bethlehem is not the Bethlehem that we remember from our childhood pageants or television renditions. This is not a quiet, gentle, peaceful town. But it is the Bethlehem of our lives. It is the Bethlehem that we live in every day. It is a place of death, a place of broken promises and relationships, a place of illness, a place of isolation, a place of loneliness, a place of frenetic schedules, a place where there is too much to do and not enough time to do it in. It is a place filled with struggle for life, a place where the future is unknown and quite frightening, a place where stumbling and bumbling are the most common moves. It is a Bethlehem filled with the kind of life we have all been living in the year 2020.

In the year 1247, which works out to about 750 years ago, in medieval London, the Holy Roman Catholic Church built a priory, a large building to house one of its many religious communities. The priory was named St. Mary of Bethlehem,--named after the very event I just described. Soon after its construction the priory was converted into a hospital, a place of mercy to care for the sick and dying. But it was not long after that the St. Mary of Bethle-

hem hospital was converted into an asylum for housing the mentally ill. Over the years, as the local people of London passed by Bethlehem Hospital every day, doing the everyday tasks of life, they began to hear all of the wild and strange sounds of the pain and suffering of those who lived there coming out from behind its walls. And over the years, as the people of London chatted shamelessly about what they imagined life was like behind those walls, they slurred the name of the hospital until it sounded like they were saying “bedlam” instead of “Bethlehem.” And a new English word was born. The word “bedlam,” as we know it and use it today, is a derivative of the name “Bethlehem.” They are one in the same word. The story of the town of Bethlehem is not only synonymous with wild, uncontrolled behavior, but it is the very definition of it.

And yet it is this story, this night, and the new life born there, to which we point to as the source for all that is joyful, all that is peaceful, all that is hopeful for the world. The bedlam of Bethlehem is the source of our hope not because for one night, one moment in time, the world stopped going mad and created the perfect picture postcard event. No! The bedlam of Bethlehem is the source of our hope because for one night, one moment in time, God stepped into the fray. The birth of a little baby, born with all of the crying, and all of the screaming, and all of the messiness of any human birth; was the one moment in time when the creator of all of life somehow stepping into of the mess she created. And from that moment on we were assured, “God is now one of us.” God is now with us in our dying, God is now with us in our broken promises and relationships, God is now with us in our illness, God is now with us in our isolation, God is with us in our fear. God is now with us in our loneliness, God is now with us in our frenetic schedule, God is now with us in our too much to do and not enough time to do it in lives.

And because God is with us, the bedlam of our lives these days is not the last word. It is only the beginning. To those who need Bethlehem to be the quiet, tranquil place of pageants and songs, it is still there in the imagination of your hearts. But for those of us who need Bethlehem to be the same rough and tumble place that threatens to overwhelm our days and our lives, it is also there with its new name, “Bedlam.” It is just the place we need it to be, where all the hopes and all the fears of all the years met their maker.

Thanks be to God. And Merry Christmas.

**CAROL**

*Joy to the World* — English Melody

Congregation

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

Joy to the earth, the Savior reigns! Let all their songs employ,  
While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains repeat the sounding joy,  
Repeat the sounding joy, repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

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.

## OFFERING

As you consider how your life has been sustained emotionally, physically and financially, during the challenging events of 2020, please take this opportunity to give your gratitude to God through your generous financial support of the ongoing ministries of Our Savior Lutheran Church.

## OFFERING PRAYER

PM: Good and loving God, we rejoice in the birth of Jesus, who came among the poor to bring the riches of your grace. As you have blessed us with your gifts, let them be blessing for others. With all heaven and earth, we shout for joy at the coming of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

C: Amen.

## PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

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

The shepherds sing, "Jesus Christ is born!" Let your church throughout the world proclaim this good news, over the hills and everywhere. Unite the voices of all your faithful people in songs of praise and rejoicing. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Heaven and nature sing, "Joy to the world!" Give respite to flocks, fields, and those who tend them. Come near to us in the beauty of nighttime, the shining of the stars, and the hush of a world at rest. May our wonder at your creation rouse our care for all the earth. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

The angels sing, "Peace on earth!" Come quickly to still the strife of this world. Hush the noise of war and violence in places of unrest. Inspire leaders of nations to seek lasting peace and sustainable provision for all in their care. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Mary sings melodies of comfort to her newborn child. Bring rest and reassurance to those facing struggles this night. Shelter travelers and those without homes. Console those who lie awake due to pain or anxiety. Heal those who are sick or hurting. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Love sings through the sound of a new baby's cry. Bless new parents and expectant parents. Comfort those who long for children, especially those running out of hope or options. Surround families of every shape and size with your love and care. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We continue to pray for those affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Bring comfort to the families of those who have died; grant healing for those recovering; protect and sustain all care providers; guide those working to develop and distribute a vaccine; and sustain those who are facing financial uncertainty due to loss of income. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

For what and for whom else do the people of God pray this morning?

*[Here other intercessions may be offered.]*

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

The heavenly chorus sings, "Glory to God in the highest!" We give you thanks for all the

saints who have proclaimed your glory in word and deed. Let us join them this night in joyful praise around your eternal throne. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of mercy, come quickly to us with grace upon grace as we lift these and all our prayers to you, in the name of Jesus.

**Amen.**

### **THE LORD'S PRAYER**

PM: Lord, remember us in your love as you teach us to pray:

**C: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.**

### **CAROL**

*Some Children See Him* — Alfred Burt

Scott Hafso

Some children see him lily white, the baby Jesus born this night.  
Some children see him lily white, with tresses soft and fair.  
Some children see him bronzed and brown, the Lord of heav'n to earth come down;  
Some children see him bronzed and brown, with dark and heavy hair.

Some children see him almond-eyed, this Savior whom we kneel beside,  
Some children see him almond-eyed with skin of golden hue.  
Some children see him dark as they, sweet Mary's Son to whom we pray;  
Some children see him dark as they, and ah! they love him too!

The children in each diff'rent place will see the baby Jesus' face  
Like theirs, but bright with heavenly grace, and filled with holy light.  
O lay aside each earthly thing, and with thy heart as offering,  
Come worship now the infant King, 'tis love that's born tonight!

### **WELCOMING THE LIGHT** A Poem by Leonard Cohen:

“Ring the bells that still can ring  
Forget your perfect offering  
There is a crack in everything  
That's how the light gets in.”



**CAROL**     *Silent Night, Holy Night!* — Franz Gruber; settings: Scott Hafso, Matthew Prins  
Emily Waltzer, Memorial Bells

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.

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!

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.

**BLESSING**

PM: Having been justified by God's grace, you are now heirs of hope – a hope born in a manger. And with this hope, you have been blessed – a hope for all people. In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

C: Amen.

**POSTLUDE**

*Hyfrydol* — Gordon Young

Jiyoung Lee

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**Serving in Worship:**

Worship Leader:	Pastor Jim Kruse
Assisting Minister:	Sue Johnson
Memorial Bells Director:	Alice Lewis
Virtual Congregation Coordinator:	Dave Carlson
Soloists:	Lori Downey, Scott Hafso, Emily Waltzer
Organ & Piano:	Jiyoung Lee
Flute & Piano:	Jan Hazelton
Piano:	Scott Hafso
Videographer:	Leslie Waltzer
Video Editor:	Dave Carlson
Banner:	Elaine Stamm
Bulletin Cover:	Craig Gillin

**Readings for Sunday:** Isaiah 61:10--62:3; Galatians 4:4-7; Luke 2:22-40

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**Our Savior Lutheran Church Staff**

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