

# Bethlehem Evangelical Lutheran Church St Stephen's Episcopal Church

40 10<sup>th</sup> Street West  
Christmas Eve

Billings, MT 59102  
December 24, 2025

5:00 Service

## 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

**Lighting of the Advent Candles** –*Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming* ELW 272

### Christmas Proclamation

**P:** The light shines in the darkness.

**C:** And the darkness has not overcome it.

**P:** The Word became flesh and lived among us,

**C:** And we saw the glory of Christ.

**P:** To us a child is born.

**C:** To us a son is given.

**P:** That is why we join our voices with those of the angels, saying:

**C:** Glory to God in the highest heaven!

**P:** Blessed be the holy Trinity, ✝ one God, whose steadfast love is everlasting.

**Amen.**

## Confession and Forgiveness

Trusting in God's steadfast love and faithfulness, let us confess our sin.

*Silence is kept for reflection.*

Reconciling God,

**we yearn for your presence to transform  
our grief, pain, and despair.**

**We confess that we have not always prepared  
room in our hearts for your love;**

**we have not always recognized  
your presence among us;**

**we have not always embraced your message of peace.**

**We cry out, weary with the burden of violence,  
oppression, and fear.**

**We confess our failure to make room  
for those seeking refuge;**

**our participation in violent systems  
that harm your innocent ones;**

**our reluctance to embody your good news.**

**Be born in us today**

**and teach us to sing the joyful song of your salvation.**

**Amen.**

God's grace upon grace flows over you.

✠ Christ's presence redeems the whole creation.

Your sins are forgiven. Let the earth rejoice and be glad!

**Amen.**

## Gathering Song

**O Come, All Ye Faithful vs 1 & 3 ELW 283**

## Prayer of the Day

**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.**

**First Reading: Isaiah 9:2-7**

*This poem promises deliverance from Assyrian oppression, a hope based on the birth of a royal child with a name full of promise. While Judah's king will practice justice and righteousness, the real basis for faith lies in God's passion for the people: The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this!*

<sup>2</sup> The people who walked in darkness  
have seen a great light;  
those who lived in a land of deep darkness—  
on them light has shined.

<sup>3</sup> You 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.

<sup>4</sup> For 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.

<sup>5</sup> For all the boots of the tramping warriors  
and all the garments rolled in blood  
shall be burned as fuel for the fire.

<sup>6</sup> For 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.

<sup>7</sup> His 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.

## Welcoming the Gospel

### Angels We Have Heard on High, verses 1 and 2 ELW 289

#### Gospel: Luke 2:1-20

*Alleluia.* 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. *Alleluia. (Luke 2:10-11)*

**P:** To us is born a Savior

**C: Jesus Christ our Lord.**

**P:** Our Christmas Eve story comes from the Gospel of Luke.

**P:** 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. To us is born a Savior.

**C: Jesus Christ our Lord.**

**P:** 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. To us is born a Savior.

**C: Jesus Christ our Lord.**

**P:** 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. To us is born a Savior.

**C: Jesus Christ our Lord.**

**P:** 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. To us is born a Savior.

**C: Jesus Christ our Lord.**

**P:** 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." To us is born a Savior.

**C: Jesus Christ our Lord.**

**P:** 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!” To us is born a Savior.

**C: Jesus Christ our Lord.**

**P:** When 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.” So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. To us is born a Savior.

**C: Jesus Christ our Lord.**

**P:** 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. To us is born a Savior.

**C: Jesus Christ our Lord.**

**P:** The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them. To us is born a Savior.

**C: Jesus Christ our Lord.**

## **Celebrating the Gospel**

**Angels We Have Heard on High, vs 3 ELW 289**

## **Homily**

## **Hymn of the Day**

**O Little Town of Bethlehem ELW 279**

## **Prayers of Intercession**

Empowered by the news of Christ’s birth, let us pray boldly for the church, creation, and all who are in need.

*A brief silence.*

Gathering God, you bring your people from every corner of the earth together before the manger that you have made a throne. Unite the church in love as we rejoice in the news of your coming. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

Creating God, you brought forth the earth and all that is in it. Join our voices with the roaring seas, the exulting fields, and the trees of the forest singing for joy on this holy night. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

Transforming God, the world trembles amid violence and war. Empower our hands, feet, and hearts with your Spirit to shatter the rod of the oppressor and turn swords into plowshares (*especially in . . . specific instances of conflict may be named*). Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

Shepherding God, you lead us to your love in the face of our neighbor. Send us into the world to find your Word made flesh in one another, especially those who are sick or struggling (*especially*). Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

Nurturing God, you dwell with us in humble places. Sustain housing and clothing ministries in this community, that all find shelter and warmth. We pray especially for youth seeking safety and care. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

*Here other intercessions may be offered.*

Abiding God, you remain at the side of all the departed. Grant all who mourn hope in the resurrection and peace in Christ Jesus. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

With the joy of Christ's birth in our hearts, we commend our prayers to you, O God, trusting in your boundless mercy and eternal love; through Jesus Christ our Savior.

**Amen.**

## **Passing of the Peace**

### **Offering Prayer**

God of glory,  
great are your wonders among us  
and many are the blessings you bestow.  
Use us and these your gifts for the needs of the world,  
that all the ends of the earth may rejoice in your saving grace,  
through Christ our Savior.

**Amen.**

## **Holy Communion - All Are Welcome!**

### **GREAT THANKSGIVING**

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts.

**We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

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.

In the wonder and mystery of the Word made flesh  
you have opened the eyes of faith  
to a new and radiant vision of your glory,  
that, beholding the God made visible,  
we may be drawn to love the God whom we cannot see.  
And so, with all the choirs of angels,  
with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven,  
we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

#### ***Hark the Herald Angels (vs. 1 and 3)***

Holy God,  
you alone are holy,  
you alone are God.

We give you thanks for your dear Son:  
at the heart of human life;  
near to those who suffer;  
beside the sinner;  
among the poor;  
with us now.

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.

We pray for the gift of your Spirit:  
in our gathering;  
within this meal;  
among your people;  
throughout the world.  
**Amen.**

### **Lord's Prayer**

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

**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.**

**P:** Jesus invites you to this table.  
God is now in flesh appearing.  
Come to the feast of joy!

### **Communion Hymns**

**Away in a Manger ELW 277**

**What Child Is This? ELW 296**

### **Prayer after Communion**

Incarnate God, you are among us at this table.  
May we treasure this gift and ponder in our hearts  
the mystery of your presence.  
Move us to discover the wonders of your love  
in the everyday moments of our lives,  
through Christ born in us.  
**Amen.**

LIGHTING OF THE CANDLES (Ushers will come forward with a large white candle. Light is taken from the Christ Candle and is passed to the ushers, who in turn will provide the light for the small candle of the first person in each pew. Then that light is passed on until everyone in the pew has a lighted candle.)

### **Lighting of the Candles**

John 1:1-14

<sup>1</sup>In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup>He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup>All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being <sup>4</sup>in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. <sup>5</sup>The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

**Let there be light.**

<sup>6</sup>There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. <sup>7</sup>He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. <sup>8</sup>He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. <sup>9</sup>The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

**Let there be light.**

<sup>10</sup>He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. <sup>11</sup>He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. <sup>12</sup>But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, <sup>13</sup>who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

**Let there be light.**

<sup>14</sup>And 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.

**Let there be light.**

### **Silent Night, Holy Night! ELW 281**

(As we sing the last stanza let us lift our candle high, so that the light may shine forth filling the entire sanctuary with light. In this way, we symbolize radiating Christ's light out into the world)

### **Blessing**

The God of love,  
Father, ✚ Son, and Holy Spirit,  
lavish you with grace,  
illumine your path,  
and increase your joy,  
today and always.  
**Amen.**

### **Dismissal**

Glory to God in the highest!  
**And peace to God's people on earth!**

Go in joy. Embody God's redeeming grace.  
**Thanks be to God.**

### **Sending Song**

*Go Tell It on the Mountain* ELW 290