

THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD

December 25th, 2023



MARTIN LUTHER  
EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH  
St. Louis, MO  
Pastor Seth Georgson  
314-914-6457

## ORDER OF SERVICE

*Stand and face the crucifix as it processes forward.*

**Hymn ----- Oh, Come, All Ye Faithful**

CW 55

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. God from true God, and Light from Light eternal,  
Born of a virgin, to earth he comes,  
Only begotten Son of God the Father. [Refrain]
3. Sing, choirs of angels, Sing in exultation;  
Sing, all ye citizens of heav'n above.  
Glory to God, all Glory in the highest. [Refrain]
4. Yea, Lord, we greet thee, Born this happy morning;  
Jesus, to thee be all glory giv'n,  
Word of the Father, Now in flesh appearing. [Refrain]

M: Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.

C: Sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvelous things. All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.

CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

M: By right, we should have nothing to sing about. We do not deserve God's love. He created humankind in his perfect image to live with him in peace forever. But Adam and Eve sinned against him, and we have sinned against him no less than they. Therefore let us confess our sins to God and ask him to forgive us.

C: **Heavenly Father, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed.**

M: We are embarrassed to think of our sins here. Our hearts are filled with love for you, but we confess we have often loved others more than you. Our eyes behold your glory, but we confess we have lusted for what you forbid. Our lips praise you, but we confess we have spoken evil again and again.

C: **We deplore our sins, O Lord.**

M: They have only gained us trouble. They have not given us the happiness they promised.

C: **For the sake of Jesus, forgive us for sinning against you, O Lord.**

M: Remind us that Christ came into the world to free us from the guilt of sin. Proclaim to us that his life and death cover our sins. Keep us from being attracted to sin. Spare us from being enslaved by sin. Help us make up for the sins we commit against one another.

C: **Deliver us from sin's power, O Lord.**

M: Glory to God in the highest! In love that astounds us, the eternal God sent his one and only Son to live among us, to obey as we could not, and to suffer what we deserved. In Christ there is indeed peace on earth. In him God extends his good will to all people. Because of Christ and by his authority, I tell you the truth: your sins are forgiven.

C: **Amen.**

PRAYER AND PRAISE

M: In the peace of forgiveness, let us praise the Lord.

*Hark the Herald Angels Sing (CW 61)*

C: 1. Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King!"

Peace on earth and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled!"

Joyful, all you nations rise, Join the triumph of the skies;

With th' angelic host proclaim, "Christ is born in Bethlehem!"

Hark! The herald angels sing, Glory to the newborn 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 th' incarnate Deity!

Pleased as man with us to dwell, Jesus, our Immanuel!

Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King!"

3. Hail, the heav'nly 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 us from the earth, Born to give us second birth.

Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King!"

*Prayer of the Day*

M: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

M: Let us pray.

Almighty God, grant that the birth of your one and only Son in the flesh may set us free from our old bondage under the yoke of sin; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: Amen.

*Be seated.*

THE WORD

**First Lesson ----- Isaiah 52:7-10**

How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of a  
herald,  
who proclaims peace and preaches good news,  
who proclaims salvation,  
who says to Zion, “Your God is king!”  
The voice of your watchmen—they lift up their  
voices.  
Together they shout for joy,  
because with both eyes they will see it

when the LORD returns to Zion.  
Break out, shout for joy together, you ruins of  
Jerusalem,  
because the LORD is comforting his people.  
He is redeeming Jerusalem.  
The LORD lays bare his holy arm before the eyes of  
all the nations,  
and all the ends of the earth will see the salvation  
from our God.

**Psalm of the Day ----- Psalm 98**

CWS p.53

*Refrain*

**The Word became flesh and lived among us. Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!**

Sing to the LORD a new song,  
for he has done marvelous things.

The LORD has made his salvation known  
and revealed his righteousness to the nations.

He has remembered his love and his faithfulness to the house of Israel;  
all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.

*Refrain*

Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth,  
burst into jubilant song with music;

make music to the LORD with the harp,  
with the harp and the sound of singing.

Shout for joy before the LORD, the King.  
He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples with equity.

**Glory be to the Father and to the Son\*  
and to the Holy Spirit,  
as it was in the beginning,\*  
is now, and will be forever. Amen.**

*Refrain*

**Second Lesson ----- Hebrews 1:1-9**

In the past, God spoke to our forefathers by the prophets at many times and in many ways. In these last days, he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact imprint of the divine nature. He sustains all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he took his seat at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

The Son became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs. For to which of the angels did God ever say:

You are my Son. Today I have begotten you?

And again:

I will be his Father, and he will be my Son.

And again, when he brought his firstborn into the world, he said:

Let all God's angels worship him.

About the angels he says:

He makes his messengers winds and his ministers flaming fire.

But about the Son he says:

God, your throne is forever and ever,  
and the scepter of righteousness is the  
scepter of your kingdom.

You have loved righteousness and hated  
wickedness.

Therefore God, your God, has anointed  
you with the oil of joy beyond your  
companions.

**Verse of the Day** ----- **Galatians 4:4,5a**

M: Alleluia. When the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law. Alleluia.

**Anthem** ----- **Come Rejoicing, Praises Voicing**

Adult Choir

Come rejoicing, Praises voicing,  
Christmas Day is breaking;  
Now th' Eternal, Lord supernal,  
Human form is taking.  
On the hay—lo, behold  
Virgin's Son, as foretold—  
Lies the precious Infant in the wintry cold.

Unabated For Him waited  
Many generations;  
Him now proudly Angels loudly  
Praise the Hope of nations.  
Let us, then, gladly sing,  
Let our songs happ'ly ring,  
As we to this holy Child our praises bring.

Tender Flower, Mighty Tower,  
Jesus Christ, our Savior;  
Heav'nly Treasure, Without measure  
Thee we love forever.  
Lord and King without end,  
Our poor hearts now befriend,  
All Thy gifts of grace and goodness to us send.

*Stand.*

## Gospel ----- John 1:1-14

*After the announcement of the Gospel, the congregation sings:*



In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him everything was made, and without him not one thing was made that has been made. In him was life, and the life was the light of mankind. The light is shining in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

There was a man, sent from God, whose name was John. He came as an eyewitness to testify about the light so that everyone would believe through him. He was not the light, but he came to testify about the light.

The real light that shines on everyone was

coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not recognize him. He came to what was his own, yet his own people did not accept him. But to all who did receive him, to those who believe in his name, he gave the right to become children of God. They were born, not of blood, or of the desire of the flesh, or of a husband's will, but born of God.

The Word became flesh and dwelled among us. We have seen his glory, the glory he has as the only-begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

*After the Gospel, the congregation sings:*



*Confession of Faith from the Athanasian Creed*

**C: Whoever wishes to be saved must, above all else, hold to the true Christian faith. Now this is the true Christian faith:**

**We believe and confess that our Lord Jesus Christ, God's Son,  
is both God and man.**

**He is God, eternally begotten from the nature of the Father,**



and he is man, born in time from the nature of his mother,  
fully God, fully man,  
with rational soul and human flesh,  
equal to the Father as to his deity,  
less than the Father as to his humanity;  
And though he is both God and man, Christ is not two persons but one,  
one, not by changing the deity into flesh,  
but by taking the humanity into God;  
one indeed, not by mixture of the natures,  
but by unity in one person;  
For just as the rational soul and flesh are one human being,  
so God and man are one Christ.

He suffered for our salvation,  
descended into hell,  
rose the third day from the dead.

He ascended into heaven,  
is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty,  
and from there will come to judge the living and the dead.

At his coming all people will rise with their own bodies.

This is the true Christian faith.

*Be seated.*

**Hymn of the Day ----- Of the Father's Love Begotten**

CW 35

1. Of the Father's love begotten Ere the worlds began to be,  
He is Alpha and Omega, He the source, the ending he,  
Of the things that are, that have been, And that future years shall see  
Evermore and evermore.

2. Oh, that birth forever blessed When the virgin, full of grace,  
By the Holy Ghost conceiving, Bore the Savior of our race,  
And the babe, the world's Redeemer, First revealed his sacred face  
Evermore and evermore.
3. This is he whom heav'n-taught singers Sang of old with one accord;  
Whom the Scriptures of the prophets Promised in their faithful word.  
Now he shines, the long-expected; Let creation praise its Lord  
Evermore and evermore.
4. Let the heights of heav'n adore him, Angel hosts his praises sing,  
Pow'rs, dominions bow before him And extol our God and King.  
Let no tongue on earth be silent, Ev'ry voice in concert ring  
Evermore and evermore.
5. Christ, to you, with God the Father, And the Spirit ceaselessly  
Hymn and chant and high thanksgiving And unending praises be,  
Honor, glory, and dominion And eternal victory  
Evermore and evermore.

**Sermon ----- John 1:1-14**

*Your Salvation Begins*

*Be seated.*

**Hymn ----- Once Again My Heart Rejoices**

CW 37

1. Once again my heart rejoices  
As I hear Far and near Sweetest angel voices.  
"Christ is born!" their choirs are singing  
Till the air Ev'rywhere Now with joy is ringing.

2. **Hear! The conqueror has spoken:  
“Now the foe, Sin and woe, Death and hell are broken!”  
God is man, man to deliver,  
And the Son Now is one With our blood forever.**
3. **Should we still fear God’s displeasure,  
Who, to save, Freely gave His most precious treasure?  
To redeem us he has given  
His own Son From the throne Of his might in heaven.**
4. **God becomes the victim, taking  
Mankind’s place By his grace, Full atonement making.  
For our life his own he tenders,  
And his grace All our race Fit for glory renders.**
5. **Softly from his lowly manger Jesus calls One and all,  
“You are safe from danger. Children, from the sins that grieve you  
You are freed; All you need  
I will surely give you.”**
6. **Come, then, banish all your sadness!  
One and all, Great and small, Come with songs of gladness;  
We shall live with him forever  
There on high In that joy Which will vanish never.**

*Offering*

*Stand.*

*Online giving option:  
[mluther.org/give](http://mluther.org/give)*



*Offerings support the spread  
of the Gospel here and around the world.*

*Prayer of the Church*

M: On this holy day, dear Father, we rejoice to hear the good news of great joy that a Savior has been born for us. For fulfilling your prophecies and in the fullness of time sending your Son to be our Savior, we give you our heartfelt thanks and praise.

**C: Unto us a child is born! Unto us a Son is given!**

M: What a great mystery of our faith is this: that God has become fully human for our salvation! Even though he is the all-powerful Lord of all, he is wrapped in strips of cloth and lying in a manger.

**C: Help us always believe that this precious child was born as our substitute to be our Savior.**

M: In the midst of our joy, we grieve for the many people in our world who do not know that Jesus has come to bring them forgiveness and healing. As the shepherds spread abroad the good news of the birth of the Savior born for all the world, may we also make use of the unique opportunities this holiday presents to tell others of what we have seen and heard concerning the child.

**C: Grant that the true peace between God and fallen mankind may comfort all people.**

*Special prayers and intercessions may follow.*

M: As the angels sang out their praise, move us also to sing out our praise to you, today and every day, as the joy of Christmas remains in our hearts.

**C: Glory to God in the highest! Amen.**

*Lord's Prayer*

**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 SACRAMENT

M: The Lord be with you.



**C:** And al - so with you.

M: Lift up your hearts.



**C:** We lift them up un - to the Lord.

M: Let us give thanks to the Lord, our God.



**C:** It is good and right so to do.

M: It is truly good and right that we should at all times and in all places give you thanks, O Lord, holy Father, almighty and everlasting God, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, for in the wonder and mystery of his birth you have opened our eyes to the glory of your grace and renewed in our hearts the fervor of your love.

Therefore, with all the saints on earth and hosts of heaven, we praise your holy name and join their glorious song:

*Holy, Holy, Holy*

*Sanctus*



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

*Prayer of Thanksgiving*

M: Blessed are you, Lord God, eternal King and gracious Father. In love you made us the crown of your creation. In mercy you planned our salvation. In grace you sent your Son to redeem us from sin.

We remember and give you thanks  
that your eternal Son, Jesus Christ, became flesh and made his  
dwelling among us,  
that he willingly placed himself under law to redeem those under law,  
that he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death on a cross,  
that he has destroyed death and brought life and immortality to light  
through the gospel.

Bless us as we receive your Son's body and blood in this Sacrament. Forgive our sins, increase our faith, strengthen our fellowship, and deepen our longing for the day when Christ will welcome us to his eternal feast. Praise and thanks to you, O God our Father, and to your Son, and to the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**C: Amen.**

*Words of Institution*

M: Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my † body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

Then he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; this is my † blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."

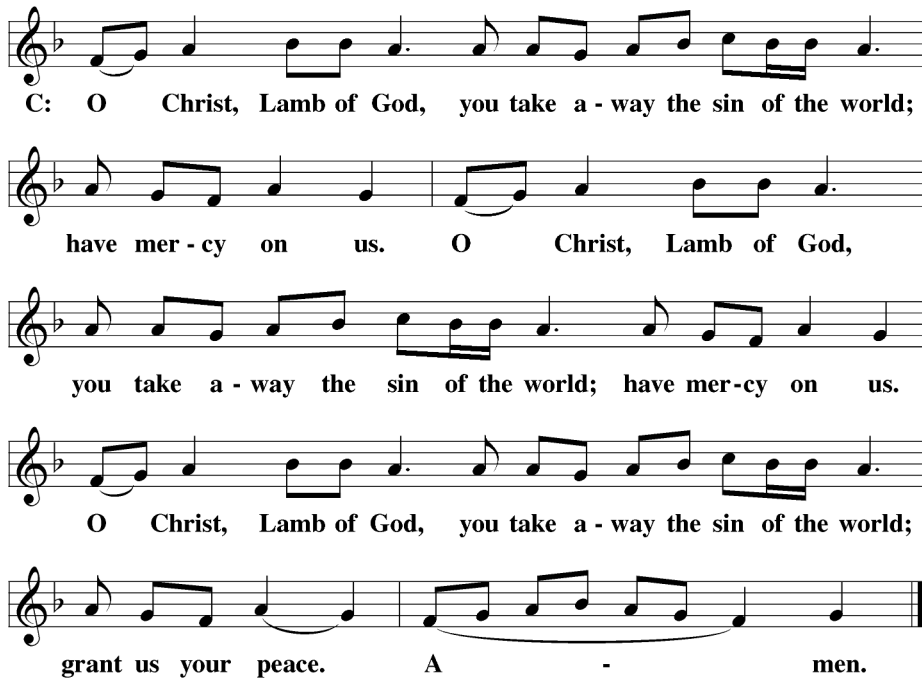
M: The peace of the Lord be with you always.



**C: A - men.**

*O Christ, Lamb of God*

*Agnus Dei*



**C:** O Christ, Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the world;  
have mer - cy on us. O Christ, Lamb of God,  
you take a - way the sin of the world; have mer-cy on us.  
O Christ, Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the world;  
grant us your peace. A - men.

*Be seated.*

**DISTRIBUTION**

*In Holy Communion we believe that Jesus gives us his own body and blood to eat and to drink for the forgiveness of our sins. We ask that, in keeping with God's Word, only confirmed members who are in confessional unity with our church (WELS and ELS) would come forward to receive this sacrament. If you have any questions or are interested in communicant membership, please speak with the pastor.*

*During the distribution, the congregation sings the following hymns:*



1. 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!
  
2. Why lies he in such mean estate  
Where oxen now are feeding?  
Good Christians, fear; For sinners here  
The silent Word is pleading.  
Nails, spear shall pierce him through;  
The cross he'll bear for me, for you.  
Hail, hail the Word made flesh,  
The babe, the Son of Mary!
  
3. So bring him incense, gold, and myrrh;  
Come, peasant, king, to own him.  
The King of kings Salvation brings;  
Let loving hearts enthrone him.  
Raise, raise the song on high;  
The virgin sings her lullaby.  
Joy, joy, for Christ is born,  
The babe, the Son of Mary!

Hymn ----- See in Yonder Manger Low

CW 58

1. See in yonder manger low, Born for us on earth below,  
See—the gentle Lamb appears, Promised from eternal years.

*Refrain:*

Hail the ever blessed morn; Hail redemption's happy dawn;  
Sing through all Jerusalem, "Christ is born in Bethlehem!"

2. Lo, within a stable lies He who built the starry skies,  
He who, throned in height sublime, Sits amid the cherubim. *Refrain*
3. Sacred Infant, all divine, What a tender love was thine,  
Thus to come from highest bliss Down to such a world as this. *Refrain*
4. Teach, oh, teach us, holy Child, By thy face so meek and mild,  
Teach us to resemble thee In thy sweet humility. *Refrain*

Hymn ----- Your Little Ones, Dear Lord, Are We

CW 46

1. Your little ones, dear Lord, are we  
And come your lowly bed to see;  
Enlighten ev'ry soul and mind  
That we the way to you may find.
2. With songs we hasten you to greet  
And humbly fall before your feet.  
Oh, blessed hour, oh, sweetest night  
That gave you birth, our souls' delight.
3. Oh, draw us wholly to you, Lord,  
And to us all your grace accord;  
True faith and love to us impart  
That we may hold you in our heart,

4. **Until at last we, too, proclaim,  
With all your saints, your glorious name;  
In paradise our songs renew  
And praise you as the angels do.**

*After the distribution is finished the congregation stands and sings:*

*Now Sing We, Now Rejoice (CW 34)*

- C: **1. Now sing we, now rejoice, Now raise to heav'n our voice;  
He from whom joy streameth Poor in a manger lies;  
Not so brightly beameth The sun in yonder skies.  
Thou my Savior art! Thou my Savior art!**

- 4. Oh, where shall joy be found? Where but on heav'nly ground?  
Where the angels singing With all his saints unite,  
Sweetest praises bringing In heav'nly joy and light.  
Oh, that we were there! Oh, that we were there!**

M: O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good.

C: **And his mercy endures forever.**

M: O God the Father, source of all goodness, in your loving kindness you sent your Son to share our humanity. We thank you that through him you have given us pardon and peace in this sacrament. We also pray that you will not forsake us but will rule our hearts and minds by your Holy Spirit so that we willingly serve you day after day, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: **Amen.**

*Blessing*

M: May he who by his incarnation gathered things earthly and heavenly into one, fill us with such joy that comes with the knowledge of the forgiveness of sins and the hope of eternal life. And the blessing of God Almighty – the Father, the Son †, and the Holy Spirit – be upon you and remain with you always.

C: Amen.

*Remain standing for the closing hymn.*

**Hymn ----- Joy to the World**

CW 62

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. No more let sins and sorrows grow  
Nor thorns infest the ground;  
He comes to make his blessings flow  
Far as the curse is found,  
Far as the curse is found,  
Far as, far as the curse is found.

4. 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.

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