

*Immanuel Lutheran Christmas Eve Candlelight Service
December 24, 2020*



“O Come, All Ye Faithful”

Performed by Austin Bratton & Joy Bratton

Oh, come, all ye faithful, Joyful and Triumphant!
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem;
Come and behold him, born the king of angels:

The highest, most holy, light of light eternal, born of a virgin, a mortal he comes;
Son of the Father now in flesh appearing!

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 heaven above!
Glory to God in the highest:

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

Yea, Lord, we greet thee, born this happy morning; Jesus, to thee be glory giv'n!
Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing:

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

C. Frederick Oakeley | John Francis Wade

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Christmas Herald:

Hebrews 1:1-4

Read by Victoria Salwasser

¹Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, ²but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through

whom he also created the worlds. ³He is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, ⁴having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

Old Testament Reading:

Isaiah 52: 7-10

Read by Ericka Gardner

⁷How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news, who announces salvation, who says to Zion, "Your God reigns." ⁸Listen! Your sentinels lift up their voices, together they sing for joy; for in plain sight they see the return of the LORD to Zion. ⁹Break forth together into singing, you ruins of Jerusalem; for the LORD has comforted his people, he has redeemed Jerusalem. ¹⁰The LORD has bared his holy arm before the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.

Special Music

“One of Us”

Performed by Joy Bratton and Laurel Jacobsen

Christmas Gospel:

John 1:1-14

1In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2He was in the beginning with God. 3All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being 4in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. 5The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome 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. 8He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. 9The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. 10He 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 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 son, full of grace and truth.

Christmas Carol

“Away In A Manger”

Performed by Karl and Allyson Nielsen

Away in a manger, no crib for his bed,
the little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head;
the stars in the sky looked 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 you, Lord Jesus; look down from the sky
and stay by my cradle till morning is nigh.

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

Children’s Message

Pastor Taylor

Christmas Message

“The Beginning”

Pastor Taylor

In the beginning there was a formless void, darkness without purpose, chaos swirling all around, and in the midst of this darkness the word of God sweeps out over creation and declares, “let there be light,” and there was light. And the Lord saw that it was good.

And so the word of God carved mountains and hung the sky and poured the oceans. The word of God painted colorful feathers of flapping birds and shined the scales of swimming fish. The word of God brought life from the soil, canopies of tree and good greens to eat. And on the sixth day, the Word of God, molded us from the dirt, fashioning each of us in his very own image, and then breathing life into our lungs. And the Lord saw that it was good.

And while the creator is good and his work holy, we, his children wandered off, as we are want to do, in search of things to distract us and pull us away. Like Adam and Eve, we ignored the word, and found ourselves ruled by temptation as we ate from the forbidden

fruit. But the word of the Lord covered us in clothing stitched with his own hands and sent us out with forgiveness to cover our shame. Like Cain, we ignored the word, and found ourselves ruled by jealousy, killing our brothers with our words and deeds because we believed that God showed their sacrifice undue favor. But the word of the Lord convicted us of our selfishness and sent us out bearing a mark of undeserved mercy so that we would not be shown the same harm we showed our brothers. Like Abram and Sara, we ignored the word, and found ourselves ruled by doubt and impatience as we sought to take the promises of the Lord into our hands. But the Word of the Lord showed us mercy to those who we had harmed and fulfilled the promises we had been given despite our interference.

When we look at the story of our lives, through the lens of our own actions, we have a story of laughter and joy, but also a story of sin and hurt. But when we chose to focus instead on God's actions within our lives, we hear a story of creation, of mercy, of reformation, of justice, and of power so immense that we can hardly begin to imagine it. And on Christmas morning, God ensures that we know that his story of love and power for all people. John's gospel, doesn't have the sweet novelty of barnyard animals or the harrowing story of a couple traveling the country side only to arrive in the inn. In many ways, John writes like he's writing a legal brief. He doesn't care about how precious the manger is, but instead John's gospel places the incarnation front and center. He wants you to know, first chapter, first verse, that this is the story of God, who created the heavens and the earth, God who lead his people out of Egypt, God who can make dry bones dance, that very same God becoming man. This baby that is born unto a virgin in Bethlehem is not just a carpenter, not just a king, not just a prophet, but he is the salvation that carpenters and kings have been waiting for. He is the messiah the prophets have been heralding.

The Christmas story is near and dear to me. The image of sheep and donkeys there to welcome my savior bring a smile to my face. The reality that shepherds, the boys and young men who were out in the field tending sheep, are invited to celebrate this king of Kings, fills my heart with joy. But it is this story from John, that leaves me in amazement because John removes all the things that I could be distracted by, takes me by the hand, and says the Word of God, that is responsible for all that is good and holy, the Word of God that was there from the beginning of all things, that is the beginning of all things, that is the baby in the manger. That is who is born in Bethlehem. That is who has come to dwell with you, so that you can see his love face to face. So you can feel his power as you break bread

together, as you fish in the sea, and mend nets on the shore. When you laugh with him, when you mourn with him, when you learn from him, when you feast with him, know that you are dwelling with the Lord. When we celebrate the miracle and love of the incarnation this Christmas morning, let us do it with the knowledge that this is more than a miraculous birth. This is a miraculous invitation to recognize that the Lord is present in the stories of our lives, that he made himself present in tangible, tactile way, so we have no reason to doubt that he would be with us, not just now, but forever because if Christ is the beginning of all things, then surely the end of all things also rests in the arms of our savior, the Prince of Peace, the King of Righteousness, the Lamb of God who is born to us this day in a manger in Bethlehem. Amen.

Carol

“O Holy Night”

Performed by Joy Bratton and Laurel Jacobsen

O holy night the stars are brightly shining, it is the night of the dear Savior's birth
Long lay the world in sin and error pining, Till He appeared and the soul felt its worth
A thrill of hope the weary world rejoices, for yonder breaks a new and glorious morn

Fall on your knees, O hear the angel voices
O night divine, O night when Christ was born
O night O holy night, O night divine

Truly He taught us to love one another, His law is love and His gospel is peace
Chains shall He break for the slave is our brother,
And in His name all oppression shall cease
Sweet hymns of joy in grateful chorus raise we, let all within us praise His holy name

Christ is the Lord, O praise His name forever
His power and glory, evermore proclaim
His power and glory, evermore proclaim

Adolphe Charles Adam | John Sullivan Dwight | Placide Cappeau

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Confession of Faith: *The Apostle's Creed*

C: I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord.

He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried.

He descended to the dead. On the third day He rose again.

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

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Christmas Offering

All offerings submitted for Christmas will be donated to the Fresno Mission.

Offertory Prayer

Prayers for All People

Please light your candles

Christmas Carol

“Silent Night”

Performed by Allison Salmon and Richard Parker

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.

Bart Millard | Brown Bannister | Franz Xaver Gruber | Jim Bryson | John Freeman Young | Joseph Mohr |
Mike Scheuchzer | Nathan Cochran | Robby Schaffer
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Prayer for Christmas

The candles are extinguished

Christmas Carol

“Joy To The World”

Performed by Rich & Allyson Kahn

Joy to the world the Lord is come, let earth receive her King
Let ev'ry heart prepare Him room, and heaven and nature sing
And heaven and nature sing, and heaven and heaven and nature sing

Joy to the world 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

Chris Tomlin | Ed Cash | George Frideric Handel | Isaac Watts | Matt Gilder
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Benediction

Postlude

Laurel Jacobsen

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