



Christmas

GOD WITH US

Christmas Eve 2020
Worship at Home



COMMUNITY
- of GRACE -

LUTHERAN CHURCH

God Is With Us!

Community of Grace Lutheran Church wants to make sure we all feel connected, right now, even though we may physically be at a distance. We are providing service notes, music, and a brief message so you can make the most of your worship at home this Christmas.

BEFORE WORSHIP

Gather your Advent wreath, the one you have held dear for many years, or the one that came in this packet.

Tonight, the infant King has arrived and the anticipation and waiting is over. We will celebrate with the lighting of all candles on the wreath, including the white Christ Candle.

Then, find candles to have ready for each person participating. We will be lighting them at the end of our worship.

If you have a Green Hymnal (*Lutheran Book of Worship*), you may want to use it as well. Words are provided if you don't have the hymnal.

LIGHT THE ADVENT WREATH

Pray These Words:

A warm glow spreads throughout our world declaring that *God is With Us*.

Tonight we proclaim the hope that inspires us. We recognize the peace that extends from our souls into the world. We herald the love passed between the Christ and us. And, we celebrate the joy that fills our spirits with excitement.

As the Christ Candle is kindled, we celebrate the compassion that overcomes hatred and the kindness that overcomes isolation.

May the light we see tonight fill our souls throughout the new year, enlivening our spirits throughout eternity. Amen.



Find Next Steps on the back page of this worship guide and watch for a postcard in early December regarding our worship options for Christmas Eve.

Christmas Eve Worship

GOD WITH US

There's a reason the early church chose to celebrate Jesus' birthday at this time of year. The days are short, the nights are long: a time of increasing darkness--but then, around the end of December comes a change!

Instead of the days increasing in darkness, there's a turn that begins an increase of the light. The church chose to celebrate December 24 & 25 as the Eve and Day of Jesus' birth to remind the world that Jesus is the light of the world. Because our God chose to find us where we were, in the darkness.

Now, with the light of his redeeming love, every moment we spend with him, even in this dark world, we grow in our true identity as children of the light.

In his love for us, our God sent Jesus to be *God With Us*: born in poverty in a lowly stable, to become the Savior of all humanity. In his death and resurrection, Jesus entered into the increasing darkness of sin, and rose instead to give us a new beginning, a new identity in his eternal light. The Joy of Christmas is to know and receive the truth, that no matter where you are in your own darkness today, Jesus' gift, here and now, is that God is with you. And, he will be until the final setting of this broken world, and the dawn of the new creation begins!

Take a moment to prepare your heart to worship God for his amazing gift this Christmas.

Warm Blessings from all of us at Community of Grace!



OPENING SCRIPTURE

John 1:1-5, 9-12, 14 (NIV) The Plan

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 all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

The true light that gives light to everyone comes into the world. He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

CAROL

LBW 42 *Of the Father's Love Begotten* vs. 1, 2, 4

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.

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!

Let the heights of heav'n adore him, angel hosts his praises sing; powers, dominions bow before him and extol our God and King! Let no tongue on earth be silent! Every voice in concert ring: evermore and evermore!



READING

Luke 1:26-33 The Annunciation

In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you." Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end."

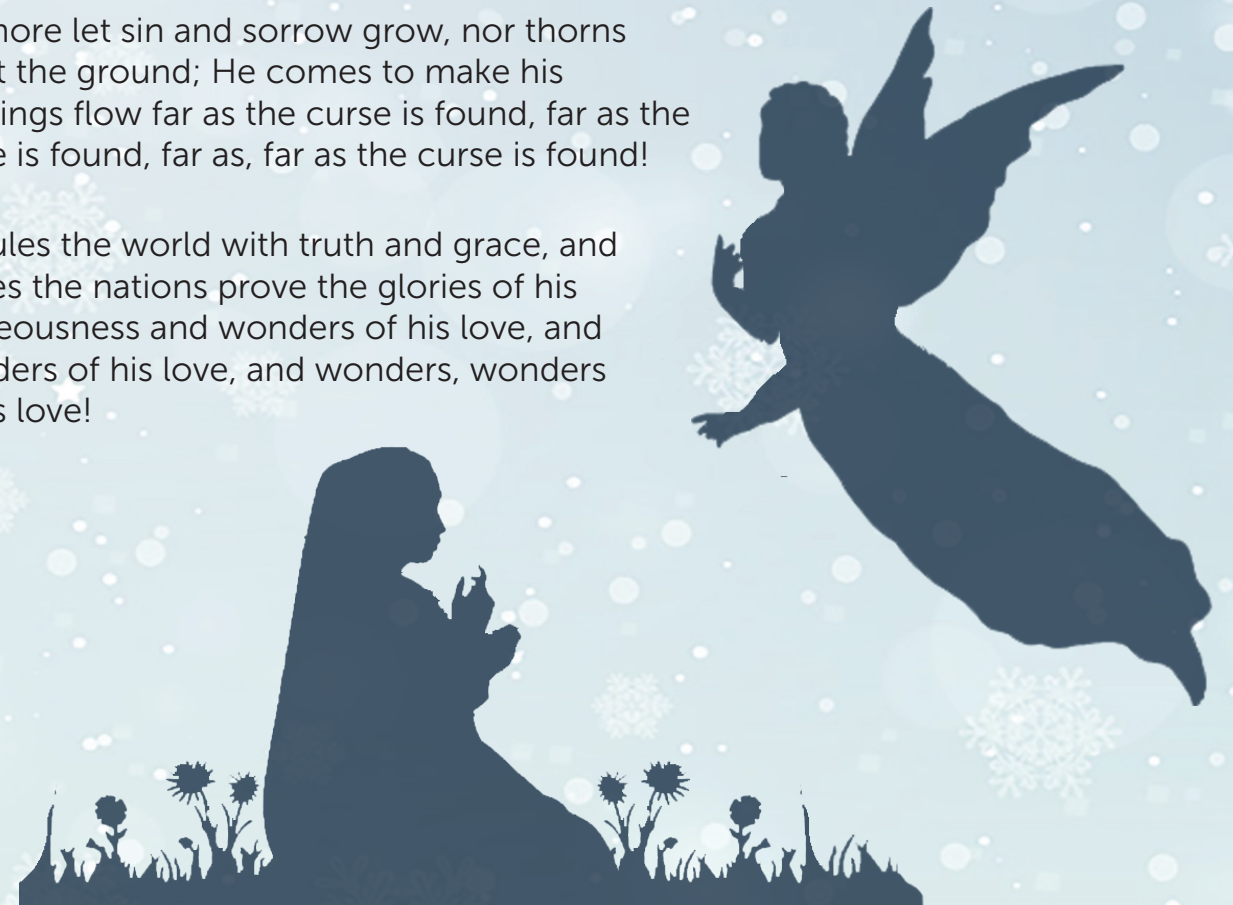
CAROL

LBW 39 *Joy to the World!* vs. 1, 3, 4

Joy to the World! The Lord is come! Let earth receive its King! Let every heart prepare him room, and heaven and nature sing, and heaven and nature sing, and heaven, and heaven and nature sing!

No more let sin and sorrow 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!

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!



READING

Luke 2:1-7 The Arrival

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) And everyone went to their own town to register. So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

CAROL

LBW 41 *O Little Town of Bethlehem*

O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie! Above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by; yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting light! The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee, tonight.

For Christ is born of Mary, and gathered all above, while mortals sleep, the angels keep their watch of wondering love. O morning stars together proclaim the holy birth, and praises sing to God the king, and peace to all the earth!

How silently, how silently the wondrous gift is given! So God imparts to human hearts the blessings of his heaven. No ear may hear him coming, but in this world of sin where meek souls will receive him still, our dear Christ enters in!

O holy child of Bethlehem, descend to us, we pray; cast out our sin and enter in, be born in us today! We hear the Christmas angels, their great, glad tidings tell; O come to us, abide with us, our Lord Immanuel!



READING

Luke 2:8-20 The Announcement

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests." When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about." So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.



CAROL

LBW 40 *What Child is This?*

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!

Why lies he in such mean estate where ox and lamb are feeding? Good Christian fear, for sinners here the silent Word is pleading. Nails, spear shall pierce him through. The cross be born, for me, for you. Hail, Hail the Word made flesh, the babe, the son of Mary!

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!

MESSAGE

by Senior Pastor Darrin Vick

"In the beginning was the Word..." We live in a world of words and images. If I say the word love, you might have an image in your mind of a romantic evening with your spouse. If I say the word peace, you might have an image of a quiet evening in a lakeside cabin. Hope might bring to mind the anticipation of a new job opportunity. And joy might fill your thoughts with images of your child's graduation from college.

"In the beginning was the Word..." The year 2020 introduced us to several words that were much more negative. Words like isolation, quarantine, pandemic, protest, and social distancing. We have heard them a lot. We have seen the images on our screens, in our neighborhoods, and in our minds that fill us with dread. The words become weapons. The words start to hurt. The hurt leads to anger. The anger leads to division. And we isolate further from each other.

"The Word became flesh..." There is a deep longing to be in the presence of one another. To see each other "in the flesh." To embrace. Zoom and Skype just don't cut it. We are cut-off. You can't hug a screen. Facetime is no substitute for fleshtime. We feel lonely. We feel alone.

"The Word became flesh and dwelt among us." Into a lonely world, God spoke! Just as it was in the beginning. God spoke and the world came into being. Now, God spoke, and his Word became flesh and blood. God spoke and a child was born. God spoke and his Son was given. God spoke and Jesus moved into the neighborhood.

We are not alone. *God is With Us!* God broke quarantine to send Jesus to a sick world. God closed the distance and Jesus knocked on our door. He has come to sit at your table. He has come to hold your hand. He has come to forgive your angry words and heal your broken heart. God is with you. He has come to save you. To save me. To save us all.

Now it's your turn to speak. It's your turn to say, "Jesus is with me. I am not alone. Jesus loves me. I am not afraid. Jesus has saved me. I am a child of God."

So during this strangest-of-all Christmases, may you know the love, hope, peace, and joy, that can be found in a manger in Bethlehem. Jesus is with you! Come and adore him, born the King of Angels!

CAROL

LBW 45 **O Come All Ye Faithful** vs. 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! O come let us adore him, O come let us adore him, O come let us adore him, Christ the Lord!

IN PREPARATION

The Story of *Silent Night*

Every year, we have ended our Traditional Christmas Eve service with the lighting of candles and the singing of the Hymn, "Silent Night." This year, this is more fitting than ever! This much beloved Christmas Carol was actually first written in response to a crisis, when 'normal' plans had fallen apart.

In 1818, as a church in the Austrian Alps was preparing for their Traditional Christmas eve service, Father Joseph Mohr discovered the church organ was broken, ruining all the plans he'd put in place for the worship music that night. But in that moment of crisis, it occurred to him that in the silencing of all his expectations, this might be the moment for a new song to be written to reflect the simplicity of the wonder of God choosing to enter our world. Together with his organist, Franz Gruber, he composed this simple, beautiful hymn. First accompanied by guitar for midnight worship Christmas Eve, proving to us still today that even when everything in this world seems broken, our expectations shattered, God still surprises us. He surprises us with the unexpected gifts of his grace, joy, and unshakable love.

This year, even though we are not able to gather together in the same way as we have in the past, *God is Still With Us*. We are not united this year by our gathering, but we are united as Jesus' people all around the world, by the promise of the same Lord: Emmanuel, *God With Us*. In witness of our faith by lighting a candle, we each remember the truth that unites us all around the world, *the light of our lives is found in Jesus*, and together his light in each of us lights the world into every dark corner, by his saving grace.



LIGHT YOUR CANDLES AND PRAY

Lord God, you know this year everything seems broken; plans and expectations in ruins. And yet, nothing of earth can destroy the song of the joy you gave us this day. Today, we celebrate the true Joy of Christmas, that you, Jesus, came to be *God With Us*. You made your home with us, so our home can be with you, now and forever. To us, a child is born, to us a son is given, and he shall be called wonderful counselor, everlasting father, Prince of Peace.

In the quiet of this night, Lord, help us to feel the wonder of this gift. You, Lord, have chosen to spend this night with us; to give us the gift of your presence, with us and for us, from this moment and in every moment yet to come, even into eternity. You are, and have come to always be, *God With Us*.

Thank you Lord, for being this gift to us, and to those all over the world this night, who claim you as the light of the world. May the honor and praise of your church, scattered though it may be, bring you honor and joy, Lord, as we light our candles against the darkness; trusting that you alone, are the light.



CAROL

LBW 65 *Silent Night*

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, heavenly 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!

PRAY

Christmas Prayer

Almighty God, you made this holy night shine with the brightness of your 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 only Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, One God, now and forever. Amen.

RECEIVE THE CHRISTMAS BENEDICTION

May you, like Mary, know that God is true to his promises.
May you, like the shepherds, know that God chooses you to celebrate with him.
May you, like the wise men, know true riches, which are not found in gold, but in God.
May you know the best Christmas present, which is Christ's presence in your heart.
In the name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

God is with you, Beloved of God! Merry Christmas



Service Elements Prepared by Pastor Angie Way
Christmas Sermon Written by Pastor Darrin Vick

All Hymns are printed with permission from *Lutheran Book of Worship*. Augsburg Publishing House and Lutheran Church in America Publication Board. 1978.

Next Steps at Community of Grace

November 22-December 13: Pour Love Out on Our Seniors

It's been a tough year for seniors in our community. Find out how you can bless some of our older congregation members and the residents at White Pines Assisted Living. Learn more at: <http://gracepeople.church/pour-out-love>.

November 25, 6:30 p.m.: Prayer & Pie Drive-in Worship

Join us in the church parking lot for some portable pie, prayer, worship, and communion. All efforts are being made to ensure safety during this new take on a familiar event. This is also the last day to drop off diapers for our Community Diaper Drive.

November 29-January 15: Christmas Tree Display

As we prepare for the birth of the Christ child, we invite you to enjoy the tree display on the front lawn of the church (Hwy 61 side). Brightly lit trees remind us that *God is With Us* during this cold, dark season. Light at Christmas has long been the symbol of Christ lighting the way and evergreen trees remind his children of Jesus' endless love.

December 2, 9, & 16, 5:30-6 p.m.: Hymn Sings on Facebook Live

We will raise our voices together from wherever we are online at: <https://www.facebook.com/gracepeoplemn/live>. You will also be able to view each hymn sing later. Lyrics can be found at <http://gracepeople.church/advent> or in the Green Hymnal (*Lutheran Book of Worship*).

December 13-January 17: Mission of Hope Birthday Gifts

For ten years Community of Grace has sent mission teams to Haiti to build, create, pray, and more. Though travel is not possible, this year, we will again be sending gifts to our friends. Find the list at: <http://gracepeople.church/gifts>.

4000 Linden Street
White Bear Lake, MN 55110
gracepeople.church
651.429.5349

Regular Sunday Worship
at 9 a.m. and 10:30 a.m.
Inperson and online live or later at:
gracepeople.live