
Sunday, December 31, 2023

First Sunday of Christmas



Jesus was God's gift
to the world, not just
for Christmas, but for
every single day--your
whole life through--
and even beyond for
all eternity.

Lessons and Carols for Christmas

THE WELCOMING OF GUESTS AND VISITORS

THE PRELUDE

GATHERING SONG O Come, All Ye Faithful

ELW 283

1 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:

Refrain

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

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

3 Sing, choirs of angels,
sing in exultation,
sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!
Glory to God
in the highest: Refrain

DIALOGUE

Jesus, the bright Morning Star, shines light in the world.

By day and night he shines for all to see.

Jesus was born in the midst of injustice and poverty

that the world may see the justice and richness of God.

God so loved the world that God sent Jesus,

so that all who believe in him may not perish but have eternal life.

Jesus is the light of the world.

Jesus is the light of our lives.

Sing to God a new song!

A song of hope, joy, and peace around the world.

OPENING PRAYER

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

Together we pray,

Gracious God of heaven and earth, you have thrown a lifeline to us in our darkness— a beam of light that shines through Jesus. Though born in a manger, he is the firstborn of all creation. Though crucified on a cross, he is the Lord of life. Fill us with the wonder and joy of his presence in the world and in our hearts. Amen.

FIRST READING: Isaiah 9:2–7

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

³You 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.

⁴For 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.

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

⁶For 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.

⁷His 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.

- 1 Lo, how a rose e'er blooming
from tender stem hath sprung!
Of Jesse's lineage coming
as seers of old have sung,
it came, a flow'r so bright,
amid the cold of winter,
when half-spent was the night.
- 2 Isaiah had foretold it,
the rose I have in mind;
with Mary we behold it,
the virgin mother kind.
To show God's love aright,
she bore to us a Savior,
when half-spent was the night.
- 3 This flow'r, whose fragrance tender
with sweetness fill the air,
dispels with glorious splendor
the darkness everywhere.
True man, yet very God,
from sin and death he saves us
and lightens ev'ry load.

SECOND READING: Micah 5:2–5a

- ²But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah,
who are one of the little clans of Judah,
from you shall come forth for me
one who is to rule in Israel,
whose origin is from of old,
from ancient days.
- ³Therefore he shall give them up until the time
when she who is in labor has brought forth;
then the rest of his kindred shall return
to the people of Israel.
- ⁴And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the LORD,
in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God.
And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great
to the ends of the earth;
- ⁵and he shall be the one of peace.

1 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.

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

4 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
 the great glad tidings tell;
 oh, come to us, abide with us,
 our Lord Immanuel!

THIRD READING: Luke 1:26–35, 38

²⁶In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, ²⁷to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." ²⁹But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. ³²He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. ³³He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."
³⁴Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" ³⁵The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. ³⁸Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

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 angelic hosts proclaim,
"Christ is born in Bethlehem!"

3 Hail the heav'n-born 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 each child of earth,
born to give us second birth.

Refrain

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

FOURTH READING: Matthew 1.18-25

Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.' All this took place to fulfil what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

'Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,
and they shall name him Emmanuel',
which means, 'God is with us.' When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife, but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus.

1 Infant holy, infant lowly,
 for his bed a cattle stall;
 oxen lowing, little knowing
 Christ the child is Lord of all.
 Swiftly winging, angels singing,
 bells are ringing, tidings bringing:
 Christ the child is Lord of all!
 Christ the child is Lord of all!

2 Flocks were sleeping, shepherds keeping
 vigil till the morning new
 saw the glory, heard the story,
 tidings of a gospel true.
 Thus rejoicing, free from sorrow,
 praises voicing, greet the morrow:
 Christ the child was born for you!
 Christ the child was born for you!

FIFTH READING: Luke 2:8–16

⁸In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see — I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: ¹¹to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹²This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." ¹³And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,

¹⁴"Glory to God in the highest heaven,
 and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"

¹⁵When 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." ¹⁶So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. ¹⁷When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; ¹⁸and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. ¹⁹But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. ²⁰The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

1 Angels, from the realms of glory,
 wing your flight o'er all the earth;
 once you sang creation's story,
 now proclaim Messiah's birth:
 Come and worship, come and worship,
 worship Christ, the newborn king.

2 Shepherds, in the fields abiding,
 watching o'er your flocks by night,
 God with us is now residing,
 yonder shines the infant light.
 Come and worship, come and worship,
 worship Christ, the newborn king.

4 All creation, join in praising God, the Father, Spirit, Son,
 evermore your voices raising to the eternal Three in One.
 Come and worship, come and worship,
 worship Christ, the newborn king.

SIXTH READING: Matthew 2:1–11

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, ²asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage." ³When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; ⁴and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. ⁵They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet:

⁶'And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel.'"

⁷Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. ⁸Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage." ⁹When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. ¹⁰When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. ¹¹On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

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 ox and ass are feeding?
 Good Christian, fear; for sinners here
 the silent Word is pleading.
 Nails, spear shall pierce him through,
 the cross be borne 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!

SEVENTH READING: John 1:1–14

In 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.

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.

5 Christ, to thee, with God the Father,
and, O Holy Ghost, to thee,
hymn and chant and high thanksgiving
and unwearied praises be:
honor, glory, and dominion,
and eternal victory
evermore and evermore! Amen

WE RESPOND TO GOD'S GIFT WITH OUR OFFERING

THE OFFERING SONG The Doxology

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
praise him, all creatures here below;
praise him above, ye heav'nly host;
praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

RESPONSIVE PRAYER

It is you, loving God, who lights our path with truth.

Your Word, Jesus, is truth.

In his light, draw all to the manger

to gather in wonder with the shepherds.

In his light, draw all to the manger

to kneel in reverence with the wise ones.

In his light, draw all to the manger

to sing for joy with the angels.

In the brightness of his life

cast away the darkness of injustice, poverty, and hunger in the world.

It is you, loving God, who meets us on our way.

In the light of Jesus, show the world the way of life. Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

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.

BLESSING AND DISMISSAL

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow!

Praise God, all creatures here below!

You are the shepherds telling the story.

We tell it in the streets and across the land.

You are the wise ones worshiping with thanksgiving.

We worship with gifts of song and service, talents and treasures.

You are the angels announcing peace.

We live with joy and go now in peace.

Almighty God, Father, † Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever.

Amen.

SENDING SONG

Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

ELW 270

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 angelic hosts proclaim,
"Christ is born in Bethlehem!"

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, incarnate deity!
Pleased as man with us to dwell,
Jesus, our Emmanuel! **Refrain**

Refrain

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

Go in peace. Carry the light of Christ in your life. **Thanks be to God.**

Postlude

Faith's Weekly Announcements
Welcome to all attending this morning!

Sunday School Class

Please join us in the doublewide following the morning service. Next week and following, Sunday School will be held between the services (9:30 am).

End of Year Details

Contributions for 2023 need to be in the offering plate or the church office TODAY. Reminder: we have a hurricane fund still receiving donations to help with the congregation's recovery expenses after Ian.

Choir Take Note

Choir rehearsals will be held at 9:30 (between services) beginning next Sunday.

It's Cold Out There

The temperatures have been pretty low lately, and our homeless population (we call them campers) are feeling the impact. If you have any blankets, warm clothing or other items for the cold weather that you can spare, please bring them to church and leave them in the blue box in the narthex.

Start the Year off Right Ladies Luncheon

The January ladies luncheon will be held Wednesday, January 17, 11:30 am at Libee's Sports Bar and Grill. The restaurant is located in the Lemon Bay Plaza by Big Lots. We will order from the menu with separate checks. Come prepared to share just one resolution for 2024 with all. Deadline to sign up is January 14. The sign-up sheet is on the bulletin board in the narthex. If you have questions, see or call Kathie Wiley (941-662-5383).

Wanted: Council Members

If you are a full member of Faith, you can be a member of the congregation council, assisting in the leadership of the church. Council members meet once a month and serve a 3-year term. This year's Nominating Committee includes Jim Taylor, Gene Newlon and Linda Bennett. If you are interested in serving, or need more information about the job, see one of them or call Barbra in the church office (941-697-3313).

You Are Invited

There will be a celebration of life for Neal Schattauer on Saturday, January 20, at 11:00 am. Everyone is welcome. Memorial gifts may be made to Faith's Memorial Garden or the Lemon Bay Playhouse.

January Newsletter

The January issue of Happenings, Faith's newsletter, is now available on our website. If you prefer, there are a few printed copies available in the narthex.

Attendance last Sunday: 170

THIS WEEK AT FAITH

Every week day morning	6:30 am	AA meets at church
Monday	8:00 pm	AA meets at church
	New Year's Day	Office closed
Tuesday	7:30 am	Men's Breakfast
	8:30 am	Work Crew
	9:00 am	Lutheran Chicks
	5:00 pm	Girl Scouts
	6:00 pm	Prayer with Grace

WE PRAY FOR...

Verna Newlon
Tom Jackling
Russ Kadera
Magee family

Lou Taylor
Jim Hardenstine
Jeanette Porter

Shirley Rice
Julie Petersen
Linda Ovitz

Serving Today

Altar Guild: RoseAnne Woodliff

Lector/ Worship Assistant: Dave Woodliff

Ushers: Marcia Wilkins

Your Church Council

Steve Wolfe (President), Jeff Kamm (Vice President), Jeff Petersen (Secretary), Art Hanson (Treasurer), Ellen Lindhurst, Jim Taylor, Gene Newlon, Larry Bennett, Jay Fisher.

Faith Lutheran Church of Rotonda

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<http://www.alivingfaith.org> e-mail: office@alivingfaith.org

We are a Stephen Ministry Congregation

Pastor Brian Armen, Cell (814) 248-0133

Secretary: Barbra Davis

Organist: Candace Montesi Custodian: Cyndy Hoops

Secretary Office Hours: 9:00 Am – Noon (M-F)

PASTOR'S OFFICE: 10:00 – 1:00 (M-TH) AND BY APPOINTMENT

Our Guiding Principle: GOD'S GRACE WINS....

As we WORSHIP Jesus as our Lord and Savior

As we LOVE one another, welcoming everyone

As we SERVE, inspired by the Holy Spirit

As a deep FAITH is taught and caught

As we make WITNESS and MISSION our life