

Stewardship 2026 Join the Journey

*"Trust in God from the bottom of your heart;
don't try to figure out everything on your own.
Listen for God's voice in everything you do,
everywhere you go." Proverbs 3:4-6*



WELCOME TO WORSHIP 9:00 a.m. Traditional Service First Sunday of Christmas December 28, 2025

Pastor: Paula Geister-Jones **Lay Ministry Administrator:** Jenny Hoffman
Organist/Pianist: Linda Kunz
Lector: Kris Adams
Acolyte: Sadie Soderling
Ushers: Sue Walls, Sandra Maerz, Sue Weum and Sharon Manson
Technical Support: Thomas Lehr, Roger Slack

As we celebrate the Twelve Days of Christmas, our gospel today confronts us with the death of innocent children at the hands of Herod. The birth of Christ does not remove the power of evil from our world, but its light gives us hope as we walk with all the "holy innocents" of past generations and today who have suffered unjustly. In our gathering around word and meal, God continues to redeem us, lift us up, and carry us as in days of old.

CALL TO WORSHIP "The Bells of Christmas" Balle/Shields

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

P: Blessed be the holy Trinity, ☩ one God, Wonderful Counselor,
Mighty Savior, Prince of Peace.

C: Amen

P: Trusting in God's steadfast love and faithfulness, let us confess our sin.
Silence is kept for reflection.

P: Reconciling God,

C: 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.

P: 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!

C: Amen.

Stand

HYMN: "Love Has Come" ELW #292

**Vs. 1: Love has come—a light in the darkness!
Love shines forth in the Bethlehem skies.
See, all heaven has come to proclaim it;
hear how their song of joy arises:
Love! Love! Born unto you, a Savior!
Love! Love! Glory to God on high.**

**Vs. 3: Love has come and never will leave us!
Love is life everlasting and free.
Love is Jesus within and among us.
Love is the peace our hearts are seeking.
Love! Love! Love is the gift of Christmas;
Love! Love! Praise to you, God on high!**

GREETING

P: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

C: And also with you.

LITANY

P: In the beginning was the Word,

C: and the Word was with God and the Word was God.

P: In the Word was life,

C: and the life was the light of all people.

P: The word became flesh and lived among us,

C: and we have seen his glory, full of grace and truth.

HYMN OF PRAISE: “Good Christian Friends, Rejoice” ELW #288

**Vs. 1: Good Christian friends, rejoice with heart and soul and voice;
give ye heed to what we say: Jesus Christ is born today;
ox and ass before him bow, and he is in the manger now.
Christ is born today! Christ is born today!**

**Vs. 2: Good Christian friends, rejoice with heart and soul and voice;
now ye hear of endless bliss: Jesus Christ was born for this!
He has opened heaven's door, and we are blest forevermore.
Christ was born for this! Christ was born for this!**

**Vs. 3: Good Christian friends, rejoice with heart and soul and voice;
now ye need not fear the grave; Jesus Christ was born to save!
Calls you one and calls you all to gain the everlasting hall.
Christ was born to save! Christ was born to save!**

SALUTATION

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

P: Let us pray.

C: O Lord God, you know that we cannot place our trust in our own powers. As you protected the infant Jesus, so defend us and all the needy from harm and adversity, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

ANTHEM: “To You, O God, I Lift Up My Soul” by Bob Hurd

Soloist: Michael Meyers

Sit

FIRST READING: Isaiah 63:7-9

⁷⁻⁹ I'll make a list of God's gracious dealings, all the things God has done that need praising, All the generous bounties of God, his great goodness to the

family of Israel— Compassion lavished, love extravagant. He said, “Without question these are my people, children who would never betray me.” So he became their Savior. In all their troubles, he was troubled, too. He didn’t send someone else to help them. He did it himself, in person. Out of his own love and pity he redeemed them. He rescued them and carried them along for a long, long time.

L: The word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

Stand

GOSPEL CANTICLE: “Once in Royal David’s City” ELW #269 Vss. 1 & 3

**Vs. 1: Once in royal David's city stood a lowly cattle shed,
where a mother laid her baby in a manger for his bed:
Mary was that mother mild, Jesus Christ, her little child.**

**Vs. 3: And our eyes at last shall see him, through his own redeeming love;
for that child so dear and gentle is our Lord in heav'n above;
and he leads his children on to the place where he is gone.**

The Gospel is announced...

P: The Holy Gospel according to Matthew the 2nd Chapter.

C: Glory to you, O Lord.

GOSPEL: Matthew 2:13-23

¹³After the scholars were gone, God’s angel showed up again in Joseph’s dream and commanded, “Get up. Take the child and his mother and flee to Egypt. Stay until further notice. Herod is on the hunt for this child, and wants to kill him.” ¹⁴⁻¹⁵ Joseph obeyed. He got up, took the child and his mother under cover of darkness. They were out of town and well on their way by daylight. They lived in Egypt until Herod’s death. This Egyptian exile fulfilled what Hosea had preached: “I called my son out of Egypt.” ¹⁶⁻¹⁸ Herod, when he realized that the scholars had tricked him, flew into a rage. He commanded the murder of every little boy two years old and under who lived in Bethlehem and its surrounding hills. (He determined that age from information he’d gotten from the scholars.) That’s when Jeremiah’s revelation was fulfilled: A sound was heard in Ramah, weeping and much lament. Rachel weeping for her children, Rachel refusing all solace, Her children gone, dead and buried. ¹⁹⁻²⁰ Later, when Herod died, God’s angel appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt: “Up, take the child and his mother and return to Israel. All those out to

murder the child are dead.”²¹⁻²³ Joseph obeyed. He got up, took the child and his mother, and reentered Israel. When he heard, though, that Archelaus had succeeded his father, Herod, as king in Judea, he was afraid to go there. But then Joseph was directed in a dream to go to the hills of Galilee. On arrival, he settled in the village of Nazareth. This move was a fulfillment of the prophetic words, “He shall be called a Nazarene.”

P: The gospel of the Lord.

C: Praise to you, O Christ.

Sit

HYMN SING

Stand

APOSTLE’S CREED

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

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
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,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

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

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

P: 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.

P: God of grace, you show us mercy not according to our worthiness, but according to the abundance of your steadfast love. Grant us the courage to go into the world and do likewise. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

P: God of abundance, the sun and moon praise you and the shining stars sing of your love. Where we have desecrated your creation, make us into a healing balm for what we have broken. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

P: God of righteousness, when leaders fail to fulfill their calls to enact justice, you suffer alongside us. Propel those in power to see you reflected in the faces of all they serve. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

P: God of life, you claim us as your own and care for us as Christ's siblings. Pour out your compassion in every place your people suffer, and protect them in the palm of your hand. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

P: God of compassion, you nurture children as the apple of your eye. As you sheltered your son Jesus from Herod's grasp, shelter all children in danger. As you comforted Rachel, comfort all who have lost children to violence. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

P: God of love, you console those who weep for lost beloved ones. Even as we mourn, we offer thanks for those who have gone before us, trusting in your comfort and protection. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

P: 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.

C: Amen.

THE SHARING OF THE PEACE

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

C: And also with you.

Sit

OFFERTORY "The First Nowell" set by Frahm

OFFERTORY PRAYER

P: Let us pray.

C: 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.

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.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Stand

BLESSING

P: The triune God, glorious Mystery, holy Incarnate One, abiding Comforter, ✠ bless you with endless grace, peace, and joy.

C: Amen.

DISMISSAL

P: Glory to God in the highest!

C: And peace to God's people on earth!

P: Go in joy. Embody God's redeeming grace.

C: Thanks be to God.

SENDING HYMN: "Go Tell it On the Mountain" ELW #290

Refrain: Go tell it on the mountain, over the hills and ev'rywhere;
go tell it on the mountain that Jesus Christ is born!

**Vs. 1: While shepherds kept their watching o'er silent flocks by night,
behold, throughout the heavens there shone a holy light. *Refrain ...***

**Vs. 2: The shepherds feared and trembled when, lo, above the earth
rang out the angel chorus that hailed our Savior's birth. *Refrain...***

**Vs. 3: Down in a lonely manger the humble Christ was born;
and God sent us salvation that blessed Christmas morn. *Refrain...***

POSTLUDE "Cold December Flies Away" Catalonian Carol set by Carlson