

A lit candle in a wreath of holly leaves and berries. The candle is white and has a bright flame. The wreath is made of green holly leaves and red berries. The background is a soft, out-of-focus brown.

SILENT NIGHT!  
HOLY NIGHT!

SON OF GOD,  
LOVE'S PURE LIGHT...

**Christmas Eve Candlelight Worship**  
Bethany Lutheran Church (ELCA)

## **Introduction to the day**

In winter's deepest night, we welcome the light of the Christ child. Isaiah declares that the light of the long-promised king will illumine the world and bring endless peace and justice. Paul reminds us that the grace of God through Jesus Christ brings salvation to all people. The angels declare that Jesus' birth is good and joyful news for everyone, including lowly shepherds. Filled with the light that shines in our lives, we go forth to share the light of Christ with the whole world.

This worship is being streamed live via Facebook and will be posted to our Website and X.  
The camera captures anyone in the first few pews of our worship space and beyond extending to the altar.

## **RINGING OF BELL**

**LIGHTING OF CANDLES** *Choir song, "O Harken Ye" during lighting of candles (5:00 PM service).*

## **WELCOME**

The assembly stands.

## **GATHERING HYMN O Come, All Ye Faithful (ELW 283)**

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!

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*

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

## **CHRISTMAS DIALOG**

Jesus Christ is the Light of the world!

**He is the Light no darkness can overcome.**

At darkest night we gather to celebrate the great light of our salvation.

**With the heavenly host we sing, "Glory to God in the highest heaven."**

In Christ, God's Word is made flesh and lives among us.

**With the shepherds, we will tell of the wonders we have seen and heard.**

## **GREETING AND PRAYER**

May the grace and truth of Christ be with you all.

**And also with you.**

Let us pray.

Almighty God, you made this holy night shine with the brightness of the 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.**

The assembly is seated.

**CHOIR ANTHEM** *"Gentle Mary, Tender Mary" (5:00 Service)*

## **READING: Isaiah 9:2-7**

*This poem promises deliverance from Assyrian oppression, a hope based on the birth of a royal child with a name full of promise. While Judah's king will practice justice and righteousness, the real basis for faith lies in God's passion for the people: The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this!*

A reading from Isaiah.

<sup>2</sup>The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness on them light has shined. <sup>3</sup>You 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. <sup>4</sup>For 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.

<sup>5</sup>For all the boots of the tramping warriors and all the garments rolled in blood shall be burned as fuel for the fire. <sup>6</sup>For 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.

<sup>7</sup>His 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.

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

**HYMN *Hark! The Herald Angels Sing (ELW 270)***

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 host proclaim, "Christ is born in Bethlehem!"

*Refrain*

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

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*

**READING: Titus 2:11-14**

*The appearance of God's grace in Jesus Christ brings salvation for all humanity. Consequently, in the present we live wisely and justly while also anticipating the hope of our Savior's final appearance.*

A reading from Titus.

<sup>11</sup>The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all, <sup>12</sup>training us to renounce impiety and worldly passions, and in the present age to live lives that are self-controlled, upright, and godly, <sup>13</sup>while we wait for the blessed hope and the manifestation of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. <sup>14</sup>He it is who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds.

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

**HYMN *O Little Town of Bethlehem (ELW 279)***

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

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!

The assembly stands.

**GOSPEL READING: Luke 2:1-7**

*God's greatest gift comes as a baby in a manger. Angels announce the "good news of great joy" and proclaim God's blessing of peace.*

The holy gospel according to Luke.

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

<sup>1</sup>In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. <sup>2</sup>This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. <sup>3</sup>All went to their own towns to be registered. <sup>4</sup>Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. <sup>5</sup>He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. <sup>6</sup>While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. <sup>7</sup>And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

**HYMN *Away in a Manger* (ELW 277)**

Away in a manger, no crib for a 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.

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.

**GOSPEL READING: Luke 2:8-14**

<sup>8</sup>In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. <sup>9</sup>Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. <sup>10</sup>But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: <sup>11</sup>to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. <sup>12</sup>This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." <sup>13</sup>And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, <sup>14</sup>"Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"

**HYMN *Angels We Have Heard on High* (ELW 289)**

Angels we have heard on high, sweetly singing o'er the plains,  
and the mountains in reply, echoing their joyous strains.

*Refrain*

Gloria in excelsis Deo! Gloria in excelsis Deo!

Shepherds, why this jubilee? Why your joyous strains prolong?  
What the gladsome tidings be which inspire your heav'nly song? *Refrain*

Come to Bethlehem and see him whose birth the angels sing;  
come, adore on bended knee Christ the Lord, the newborn king. *Refrain*

**GOSPEL READING: Luke 2:15-20**

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

The gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, O Christ.**

The assembly is seated.

## SERMON

## OFFERING

*We are grateful for your gifts, and they are needed to continue the work of the church. Options on ways to give are found on our website ([www.wbbethany.org](http://www.wbbethany.org)) and at the end of this bulletin.*

The assembly stands and sings the hymn below as the gifts are brought forward.

## HYMN *What Child is This (ELW 296)*

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!

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!

## PRAYER OF PREPARATION

Merciful God,

**We do not presume to come to your table trusting in our righteousness, but in your abundant mercy. Grant us, therefore, gracious Lord, so to eat the body and blood of your dear Son, Jesus Christ, that we may live in him and he in us, now and forever. Amen.**

## GREAT THANKSGIVING

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts.

**We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God, through our Savior Jesus Christ. In the wonder and mystery of the Word made flesh, you have opened the eyes of faith to a new and radiant vision of your glory, that, beholding the God made visible, we may be drawn to love the God whom we cannot see. And so, with all the choirs of angels, with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:



Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow-er and might,



heav'n and earth are full of your glo-ry. Ho-san - na in the high - est.



Bless - ed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Ho -



san - na in the high - est, ho - san - na in the high - est.

## **WORDS OF INSTITUTION**

In the night in which he was betrayed,  
our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks;  
broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:  
Take and eat; this is my body, given for you.  
Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks,  
and gave it for all to drink, saying:  
This cup is the new covenant in my blood,  
shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin.  
Do this for the remembrance of me.

## **THE LORD'S PRAYER**

Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray.

**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 assembly is seated.

## **HOLY COMMUNION**

*Communion today will be distributed in a continuous line. The cups in the center of the tray contain white grape juice. All other cups are wine. Gluten-free wafers are available upon request. All gathered who believe Jesus Christ is their Lord and Savior are invited to come to Holy Communion with repentant hearts believing that Christ forgives our sins and guides our lives. Strengthened, forgiven, and nourished through this meal the Spirit sends us forth in service and to proclaim the good news of Christ's love. Children and adults who do not take communion may come forward for a blessing.*

## **HYMNS DURING COMMUNION**

***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!

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

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

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

### ***The First Noel (ELW 300)***

The first Noel the angel did say was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay;  
in fields where they lay, keeping their sheep, on a cold winter's night that was so deep.

#### *Refrain*

Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel! Born is the King of Israel.

They looked up and saw a star shining in the east beyond them far;  
and to the earth it gave great light, and so it continued both day and night. *Refrain*

And by the light of that same star three wise men came from country far;  
to seek for a king was their intent, and to follow the star wherever it went. *Refrain*

This star drew near to the northwest, o'er Bethlehem it took its rest;  
and there it did both stop and stay right over the place where Jesus lay. *Refrain*

Then entered in those wise men three, full rev'rently upon their knee,  
and offered there in his presence their gold, and myrrh, and frankincense. *Refrain*

The assembly stands.

### **PRAYER**

Let us pray.

We thank you, wondrous God, for Jesus, God with us, in these gifts of bread and wine. As we have shared this feast of love, strengthen us to share your love with all the world. In Jesus' name we pray.

**Amen.**

### **THE GOSPEL OF THE INCARNATION: John 1:1-14**

*From an altar candle, the pastor lights a candle, which symbolizes Christ, the Light of the world. Assistants light their candles from this candle and then light the candle of each worshipper nearest the center aisle. Those gathered online are also invited to light a candle at home.*

### **THE PRAYERS**

Wonderful Counselor, increase our joy as the church gathers on this holy night to sing of our dear Savior's birth. May the story of salvation live in the hearts of all who sing of its wonders. God of grace,  
**Hear our prayer.**

Mighty God, you have broken the yoke of sin's burden through the birth of your Son. Comfort those whose burdens distract them from the deeper peace of this holy night and grant them a restful mind. God of peace,  
**Hear our prayer.**

Everlasting Father, uphold all who are in sorrow or need of your divine goodness and mercy. We remember with thanksgiving all who have died and who now rest in your peaceful light. God of love,  
**Hear our prayer.**

Gracious God, bathe us always in the light of your Word made flesh, Jesus Christ our Lord.  
**Amen.**

### **HYMN OF LIGHT *Silent Night, Holy Night! (ELW 281)***

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.

## BLESSING

May God, who has called you out of darkness to be servants of light, grant you the joy of the angels, the eagerness of the shepherds, and the peace of the Christ Child. Almighty God, the Father, the ☩ Son, and the Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever.

**Amen.**

*The candles are extinguished.*

## DEPARTURE HYMN *Joy to the World (ELW 267)*

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.

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.

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.

## POSTLUDE



Thank you for worshipping with us today. Just as Jesus welcomed the stranger, we believe all are welcome here. For more information about our life together in Christ, visit: [www.wbbethany.org](http://www.wbbethany.org)

### Announcements

- Thanks to all our Ministry Assistants for your help tonight. We could not do it without you!
- Thanks to our pianist, Jill Barnhart, and the Bethany choir for singing at the 5:00 service.
- Each hymn can be found in the *Evangelical Lutheran Worship (ELW)* pew hymnal by the number found printed alongside the title of each hymn in the bulletin should you prefer to sing alongside the printed melody notation.
- Have you often wondered what “Gloria in excelsis Deo” means in the hymn *Angels We Have Heard on High*? It is Latin and the English translation is “Glory to God in the highest.”

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Money can be placed in offering plate on Sunday morning or mailed to:  
Bethany Lutheran Church Box 236, West Branch, IA 52358.



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