

AUGUSTANA
where Lutherans and Anglicans worship together
Christmas Eve, December 24, 2020

Welcome to worship. Including St. Paul's in Radisson and First Saskatchewan at Langham

Instructions: candles

Thank you

Hymn: O Come all Ye Faithful # 283 (v. 1, 3, 4)

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!

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

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

Opening Litany

Hope is here: **FOR GOD HAS COME TO US**

Joy is here: **FOR WE HAVE SEEN GOD'S COMPASSION**

Love is here: **FOR THE CHRIST CHILD IS BORN**

OPENING PRAYER

Tender and precious God, from ancient times the promise of your salvation has sustained your people. With Mary and Joseph, teach us to treasure in our hearts the birth of Jesus, and with shepherd and angels, lead us to praise his holy name.
Amen

Isaiah 9:2-7

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.
 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.
 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.
 For all the boots of the tramping warriors
 and all the garments rolled in blood
 shall be burned as fuel for the fire.
 For a child has been born for us,
 a son given to us;
 authority rests upon his shoulders;
 and he is named
 Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God,
 Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
 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 onwards and for evermore.
 The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

Word of God, Word of life

Thanks be to God

Hebrews 1:1-4

Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by
 the prophets, but 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. He 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, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

Word of God, Word of life
Thanks be to God

Hymn: Angels We have heard on High # 289 verses 1 & 3

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.

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

Gospel: Luke 2:1-20

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. 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. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. 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.

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 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: to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.' And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,
'Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace among those whom he favours!'

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

Hymn: Love Has Come # 292 verses 2 & 3

Love is born! Come, share in the wonder. Love is God now asleep in the hay. See the glow in the eyes of his mother, what is the name her heart is saying? Love! Love! Love is the name she whispers; Love! Love! Jesus, Immanuel.

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!

Meditation

My fascination with creches. I am a collector of creches (the manger scene)

- Two are in an eggshell, one from a brief stop in Peru, the other made by a dear person; one made out of grass, another that glows in the dark, one that a traveler brought back from New Zealand. Another small one of porcelain from France. Some are beautiful and some are kind of tacky.

My first crèche came to me as damaged goods. I was just a teenager when I bought it ... it was on sale -- of course – it was missing the stable part which had gotten broken in transit from the holy land. A friend worked at the book store and showed it to me and I loved it even without the stable to hold all the figures. At the time I had no idea how important that crèche would become in the years to come.

Every year I have set it up. From the time that the children were toddlers I have set up Bethlehem in one part of our living room and put Mary and Joseph on the other side of the room – because they were on their way to Bethlehem – at the beginning of Advent their journey began. Every day one of the girls got to move Mary and Joseph a little bit closer to Bethlehem until finally when we came home from Christmas Eve services we moved Mary and Joseph to the manger and I brought out the baby Jesus. Their journey was complete.

The first crèche is said to have been created by St. Francis of Assisi a few years before he died. He got the idea of celebrating the birth of the Christ child by re-enacting the story in a stable. He used real people and animals in a real stable. He wanted “to see as much as possible with my

own body's eyes". It was such a moving experience that people began to look for a way to be part of the celebration of Christmas. And so we have crèches in many different forms and sizes to help us experience the Christmas story in our own body. When my children moved the figures of our crèche around they experienced the Christmas story in a more complete way than to just hear the story.

Our children were on the same wavelength as St. Francis – they wanted to know the Christmas story with their whole body. I think that must also be my attraction to a crèche.

My interest in the manger scene goes way back though. Where I grew up in Calgary there was a Roman Catholic church on the way home "Our Lady of Perpetual Help" and they had a life size outdoor crèche. I remember it clearly because, as a child, I found it very disturbing. The baby Jesus was grossly underdressed for winter. Every time we drove by ...

So I have brought a warm blanket to wrap up the doll who is helping us remember and celebrate Jesus' birth.

But first there are a few things I would like clear up and get rid of about Christmas ... the things I would like to rip out of how we celebrate

- Busy-ness – rushing about
- Commercialism
- Greed
- Excess of food and drink
- Poverty
- Homelessness
- hunger
- refugees
- romantic and sentimental stories that take over the Christmas story

There's not much left of my blanket is there. How will it ever keep the poor baby warm and protected? But there are some things about Christmas that are so important: especially the Christmas this year that is so different

- In the midst of a pandemic ... people have found ways to share with the Salvation army
- Our congregation's hampers. Without having a weekly worship service and offering plate being passed around, I wasn't sure if we would be able to do hampers this year, but again people found out how to share.
- Across the street we have some neighbours who are very isolated. I saw someone come to visit from them from the sidewalk.
- Every time I have let a need be known in our church community. I have been overwhelmed by the response of those who have said, "I can do that."
- The non-techie people who have taken on all kinds of techie things so that our church family could continue to be a church family
- The phone calls and letters and emails and video calls that have been shared

Our baby is wrapped up in the bits and pieces. *"And Mary 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. And the Angel's words to the shepherds: "This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger."*

That's how we live out the precious gift of this child -- "God with us" -- in bits and pieces.

God bless you this Christmas as you find the bits and pieces in your own life and faith that honour the birth of this child.

Choir: A La Nanita

Offering

- O Little Town of Bethlehem v. 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.

- This would be a time of passing an offering plates down the pew. Instead, this year, it is an opportunity to think about a different kind of offering. What is it you have to offer to the Glory of God: what gifts and abilities are yours' to offer. What of your heart, and mind and soul do you have to offer to love of God and love of neighbor. We have an offering of music to give us some time to reflect on that tonight.
- Bells "Away in a Manger" or other special music
- Prayer (Ruth Zuk)

Ruth: In the stillness of this night we give you thanks, O God, for bringing us to Bethlehem. We thank you for the precious gift that came to us wrapped in swaddling clothes. May this be a gift we share with all creation. Amen.

Candle Light – please take time in your own home to light your candles

The Gospel of the Incarnation John 1:1-14

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

And 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.

[still picture of crèche and candle light]

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 Al-le-lu-ia!
 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

PRAYER

In the face of the *Gospel* let us ask God for a good Christmas
 that no powerful nation should tax the poor or uproot them;
 that no unmarried mother should be put away in disgrace
 that no door will be shut on those who need to find it open
 that shepherd and sheep and all of creation need not be afraid
 that wise men and wise women might appear in all those places in our
 world where they are needed
 that children may be protected from those who would abuse them
 that this Christmas,
 worship may become a manger
 and the rumor become a reality
 that Christ has come among us.

This we pray in Jesus name who taught us to pray:

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from Cloth for the Cradle

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 - May you be filled with the wonder of Mary, the obedience of Joseph, the joy of the angels, the eagerness of the shepherds, the determination of the magi, and the peace of the Christ child. Almighty God, Father, + Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever. **Amen.**

Hymn "Joy to the World" # 267 all verses

Joy to the world! The Lord is come
 Let earth receive her King!
 Let every 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

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,
 ar 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

Dismissal

Go in peace, Share the gift of Jesus. **Thanks be to God**

Thanks

Musicians: Deborah Buck, Augustana St. Timothy Choir

Worship Assistant: Ruth Zuk

Technical: Bryan Tastad, Greg Fowlie-Neufeld

Permissions: