

WELCOME TO WORSHIP!



THE GIFT OF GOD

God Gives Heaven's Best Gift
in Earth's Unlikeliest Place

Christmas Eve 2024

St. Paul's Ev. Lutheran Church | Wisconsin Rapids, WI

December 24, 2024



Welcome To Worship

If you are a visitor to our church, we extend you a warm welcome. We are happy you are here. Please fill out a Connect Card to let us know how we might continue to serve you.

It's encouraging to see parents bring their families to worship the Lord. If your child becomes restless, you can use the Family Room to calm them. Quiet bags and children's bulletins are also available to keep little ones busy. Restrooms are located in the hallways along either side of the worship space. For those with special needs, large print copies of the service folder and listening devices are available from the ushers. One of our ushers can help you find the restrooms or family room and answer any other questions.

Service Notes For This Service

In the season of Christmas, we receive the gift of God. That does not simply mean we receive the gifts God gives. When we look into the manger, we see that God is the gift. In the person of Jesus, God gave us himself.

Because God put heaven's best gift in earth's unlikeliest place, there will always be room at the manger for you. You will not need to stand in line, wait your turn, or prove yourself worthy first. Instead, you can know with certainty that God gave this gift—and all the gifts he brought with him—"to you."

Tonight's service combines scripture readings and sung responses. This pattern of service has become familiar because of similar services are held each year in the chapel of King's College, Cambridge, England. First scheduled in 1918, the King's service is held on Christmas Eve and is broadcast all over the world. Entitled *A Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols*, the event includes a traditional set of nine scripture readings and several hymns sung every year by the congregation.

Those Serving in Worship

Pastor Peter Plagenz; Organist Destinee Fiecko; Church Choir; Contemporary Choir; Brass

Acknowledgements

Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols from Christian Worship. Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are from the Holy Bible, Evangelical Heritage Version® (EHV®) © 2017 Wartburg Project. All rights reserved. Used by permission. Liturgical and musical settings of Scripture based on text from The Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide.

Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols

Please use the hymnals for any tunes that are unfamiliar or to assist in singing harmony.

Welcome and Devotion

Hymn

354 O Come, All Ye Faithful

- 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)**

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

- 2 God from true God, and Light from Light eternal,
born of a virgin, to earth he comes!
Only-begotten Son of God the Father: (Refrain)**
- 3 Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation,
sing, all ye citizens of heav'n above!
Glory to God, all glory in the highest: (Refrain)**
- 4 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)**

Text: tr. Frederick Oakeley, 1802–1880, alt.; John F. Wade, c. 1711–1786; Public domain

Stand

Bidding Prayer

Dear people of God, in this Christmas season, it is our duty and delight to hear again the message of the angels and, in heart and mind, to go to Bethlehem and see this thing which has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us—the Christ Child lying in a manger.

Let us read and learn in Holy Scripture the story of the loving purposes of God from the first days after our fall into sin to the glorious redemption brought to us by this holy child.

But first, let us pray for people all over the world who would delight with us to know the good news of Jesus Christ and who would join with us in singing his praises. Let us pray for the people of this city and for all those in our own congregation.

And, because this would please our Lord, let us remember in his name the poor and helpless, the cold, the hungry and the oppressed, the sick and those who are sad, the lonely and the unloved, and the elderly and the little children. We especially remember all those who do not know the Lord Jesus, those who do not love him, and those who by sin have grieved his heart of love.

Finally, let us remember before God all those who rejoice with us in heaven, who live in greater light than we, that multitude which no one can number, whose hope was in the Word made flesh, who died in faith, and who live before the throne of God and praise him each day in his temple. We confess that we are united with them as we are united with one another.

We humbly offer up these prayers and praises in the words that Christ himself taught us.

Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.

Be seated

Contemporary Choir

He Has Come for Us

First Lesson

Genesis 3:8–15

The Seed of the woman will crush the serpent's head.

⁸They heard the voice of the LORD God, who was walking around in the garden during the cooler part of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.

⁹The LORD God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?"

¹⁰The man said, "I heard your voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, so I hid myself."

¹¹God said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree from which I commanded you not to eat?"

¹²The man said, "The woman you gave to be with me—she gave me fruit from the tree, and I ate it."

¹³The LORD God said to the woman, "What have you done?"

The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

¹⁴The LORD God said to the serpent:

Because you have done this,
you are cursed more than all the livestock,

and more than every wild animal.
You shall crawl on your belly,
and you shall eat dust all the days of your life.
¹⁵I will put hostility between you and the woman,
and between your seed and her seed.
He will crush your head,
and you will crush his heel.

Hymn

338 On Christmas Night All Christians Sing

- 1 **On Christmas night all Christians sing
to hear the news the angels bring,
on Christmas night all Christians sing
to hear the news the angels bring,
news of great joy, news of great mirth,
news of our merciful King's birth.**

- 2 **When sin departs before his grace,
then life and health come in its place,
when sin departs before his grace,
then life and health come in its place;
angels and saints with joy may sing,
all for to see the newborn King.**

- 3 **All out of darkness we have light,
which made the angels sing this night,
all out of darkness we have light,
which made the angels sing this night:
“Glory to God and peace to men
now and forevermore. Amen.”**



Text: English, abr.; Public domain

Second Lesson

Genesis 22:15–18

God promises to faithful Abraham that in his seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.

¹⁵The Angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven ¹⁶and said, “I have sworn by myself, declares the LORD, because you have done this thing and have not withheld your son, your only son, ¹⁷I will bless you greatly, and I will multiply your descendants greatly, like the stars of the sky and like the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the city gates of their enemies. ¹⁸In your seed all the nations of the earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice.”

Hymn

1 Hark! The herald angels sing,
“Glory to the newborn King;
peace on earth and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled!”
Joyful, all ye nations rise,
join the triumph of the skies;
with th’ angelic host proclaim,
“Christ is born in Bethlehem!” (Refrain)

Ref Hark! The herald angels sing,
“Glory to the newborn King!”

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 th’ incarnate Deity!
Pleased as man with man to dwell,
Jesus, our Immanuel! (Refrain)

3 Hail, the heav’nly 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 man no more may die,
born to raise the sons of earth,
born to give them second birth. (Refrain)



Text: Charles Wesley, 1707–1788, alt.; Public domain

Third Lesson

Isaiah 9:2, 6, 7

The prophet foretells the coming of the Savior.

²The people walking in darkness have seen a great light.
For those living in the land of the shadow of death, the light has dawned.

⁶For to us a child is born.
To us a son is given.
The authority to rule will rest on his shoulders.
He will be named:

Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

⁷There will be no limit to his authority
and no end to the peace he brings.
He will rule on David's throne and over his kingdom,
to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness
from now on, into eternity.
The zeal of the LORD of Armies will accomplish this.

Hymn

361 Go, Tell It on the Mountain

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

- 1** While shepherds kept their watching
o'er silent flocks by night,
behold, throughout the heavens
there shone a holy light. (Refrain)
- 2** The shepherds feared and trembled
when lo, above the earth
rang out the angel chorus
that hailed our Savior's birth. (Refrain)
- 3** Down in a lowly manger
the humble Christ was born,
and God sent us salvation
that blessed Christmas morn. (Refrain)



Text: John W. Work II, 1873–1925, verses, alt.; African American spiritual, refrain; Public domain

Fourth Lesson

Isaiah 11:1–9

A Branch from the stump of Jesse will bear fruit.

- ¹A shoot will spring up from the stump of Jesse,
and a Branch from his roots will bear fruit.
- ²The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him:
the Spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the Spirit of counsel and might,
the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.
- ³He will be delighted with the fear of the LORD.

He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes,
nor will he render decisions based on what he hears with his ears,
⁴but with righteousness he will judge the poor,
and he will render fair decisions in favor of the oppressed on the earth.
He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth,
and with the breath from his lips he will put the wicked to death.
⁵Righteousness will be the belt around his waist,
and faithfulness the belt around his hips.
⁶The wolf will dwell with the lamb,
and the leopard will lie down with the young goat,
the calf, the young lion, and the fattened calf together,
and a little child will lead them.
⁷The cow and the bear will graze together,
and their young ones will lie down together.
The lion will eat straw like the cattle.
⁸The nursing child will play near a cobra's hole,
and the weaned child will put his hand into a viper's den.
⁹They will not hurt or destroy anywhere on my holy mountain,
for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD,
as the waters cover the sea.

Choir

Ding Dong Merrily on High

Fifth Lesson

Luke 1:26–35, 38

The angel Gabriel announces to Mary the birth of a son.

²⁶In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee named Nazareth, ²⁷to a virgin pledged in marriage to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you. Blessed are you among women."

²⁹But she was greatly troubled by the statement and was wondering what kind of greeting this could be. ³⁰The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, because you have found favor with God. ³¹Listen, you will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to name him Jesus. ³²He 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. ³³He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and his kingdom will never end."

³⁴Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?"

³⁵The angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God."

³⁸Then Mary said, "See, I am the Lord's servant. May it happen to me as you have said."
Then the angel left her.

Hymn

- 1 “From heav’n above to earth I come
to bear good news to ev’ry home;
glad tidings of great joy I bring,
whereof I now will say and sing:
- 2 “To you this night is born a child
of Mary, chosen virgin mild;
this little child of lowly birth
shall be the joy of all the earth.
- 5 (Men) “These are the signs which you shall mark:
the swaddling clothes and manger dark.
There you will find the infant laid
by whom the heav’ns and earth were made.”
- 7 Come here, my friends, lift up your eyes,
and see what in the manger lies.
Who is this child, so young and fair?
It is the Christ Child lying there.
- 13 (Women) Ah, dearest Jesus, holy Child,
prepare a bed, soft, undefiled
within my heart, made clean and new,
a quiet chamber kept for you.
- 15 Glory to God in highest heav’n,
who unto us his Son has giv’n,
while angels sing with pious mirth
a glad new year to all the earth!



Text: tr. Catherine Winkworth, 1827–1878, alt.; Martin Luther, 1483–1546; Public domain

Sixth Lesson

Luke 2:1–7

St. Luke tells of the birth of Jesus.

¹In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. ²This was the first census taken while Quirinius was governing Syria. ³And everyone went to register, each to his own town. ⁴And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the town of Nazareth, into Judea, to the town of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was from the house and family line of David. ⁵He went to be registered with Mary, his wife, who was pledged to him in marriage and was expecting a child.

⁶And so it was that while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. ⁷And she gave birth to her firstborn son, wrapped him in swaddling cloths, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

Hymn

340 *Away in a Manger*

- 1 **Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,
the little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head.
The stars in the bright sky looked down where he lay,
the little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.**
- 2 **The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes,
but little Lord Jesus, no crying he makes.
I love you, Lord Jesus; look down from the sky,
and stay by my side until morning is nigh.**
- 3 **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 take us to heaven to live with you there.**



Text (sts. 1–2): The Myrtle, Boston, 1884; (st. 3): Vineyard Songs, Louisville, 1892, alt.; Public domain

Seventh Lesson

Luke 2:8–20

The shepherds go to the manger.

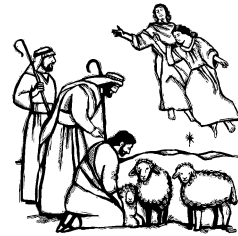
⁸There were in the same country shepherds staying out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock at night. ⁹An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified! ¹⁰But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. For behold, I bring you good news of great joy, which will be for all people: ¹¹Today in the town of David, a Savior was born for you. He is Christ the Lord. ¹²And this will be a sign for you: You will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.” ¹³Suddenly, there was with the angel a multitude from the heavenly army, praising God and saying, ¹⁴“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward mankind.”

¹⁵When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Now let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.” ¹⁶So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. ¹⁷When they had seen him, they told others the message they had been told about this child. ¹⁸And all who heard it were amazed by what the shepherds said to them. ¹⁹But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. ²⁰And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

Hymn

335 To Shepherds as They Watched by Night

- 1 To shepherds as they watched by night
appeared a host of angels bright;
“Behold the tender babe,” they said,
“in yonder lowly manger laid,
- 2 “At Bethlehem, in David’s town,
as Micah did of old make known.
It is the Christ, your Lord and King,
who will to all salvation bring.”
- 3 (Women) O then rejoice that through his Son
God is with sinners now at one;
made like yourselves of flesh and blood,
your brother is th’ eternal God.
- 4 What harm can sin and death then do?
The true God now abides with you.
Let hell and Satan storm and rave,
Christ is your brother—you are safe.
- 5 (Men) Not one he will or can forsake;
his promise he will never break.
Let ev’ry scheme the tempter try,
you may his utmost pow’rs defy.
- 6 You shall and must at last prevail;
God’s own you are, you cannot fail.
To God forever sing your praise
with joy and patience all your days.



Text: Martin Luther, 1483–1546; tr. Richard Massie, 1800–1887, alt.; Public domain

Eighth Lesson

Matthew 2:1–12

The Magi are led by the star to Jesus.

¹After Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, when Herod was king, Wise Men from the east came to Jerusalem. They asked, ²“Where is he who has been born King of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.” ³When King Herod heard this, he was alarmed, and all Jerusalem with him. ⁴He gathered together all the people’s chief priests and experts in the law. He asked them where the Christ was to be born. ⁵They said to him, “In Bethlehem of Judea, because this was written through the prophet:

⁶You, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are certainly not least among the rulers of Judah: because out of you will come a ruler, who will shepherd my people, Israel.”

⁷Then Herod secretly summoned the Wise Men and found out from them exactly when the star had appeared. ⁸He sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and search carefully for the child. When you find him, report to me, so that I may also go and worship him.”

⁹After listening to the king, they went on their way. Then the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them, until it stood still over the place where the child was. ¹⁰When they saw the star, they rejoiced with overwhelming joy. ¹¹After they went into the house and saw the child with Mary, his mother, they bowed down and worshipped him. Then they opened their treasures and offered him gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. ¹²Since they had been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they went back to their own country by another route.

Hymn

353 Joy to the World

- 1 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.
- 2 Joy to the earth, the Savior reigns!
Let men their songs employ,
while fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains
repeat the sounding joy,
repeat the sounding joy,
repeat, repeat the sounding joy.
- 3 No more let sins and sorrows 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.
- 4 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.



Stand

Ninth Lesson

John 1:1–14

St. John unfolds the great mystery of the incarnation.

¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was with God in the beginning. ³Through him everything was made, and without him not one thing was made that has been made. ⁴In him was life, and the life was the light of mankind. ⁵The light is shining in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

⁶There was a man, sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷He came as an eyewitness to testify about the light so that everyone would believe through him. ⁸He was not the light, but he came to testify about the light.

⁹The real light that shines on everyone was coming into the world. ¹⁰He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not recognize him. ¹¹He came to what was his own, yet his own people did not accept him. ¹²But to all who did receive him, to those who believe in his name, he gave the right to become children of God. ¹³They were born, not of blood, or of the desire of the flesh, or of a husband's will, but born of God.

¹⁴The Word became flesh and dwelled among us. We have seen his glory, the glory he has as the only-begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Be seated

Offering

Moved by God's love in Christ, we offer him our first and best gifts, purely out of thanks to him. Guests, please don't feel obligated to take part in the offering. We're just happy you're here as our guest to hear and take to heart the message of Jesus. If the gospel message has moved you to give and you would like an electronic option, you can scan this QR code with your mobile phone. It will connect you with our website's giving page.



Musical Offering

Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

Stand

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

May he who by his incarnation gathered into one things earthly and heavenly, fill you with such joy that comes from the forgiveness of sins and the hope of eternal life; and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the ☩ Son and the Holy Spirit, be upon you and remain with you always.

Amen.

Note: We will not be lighting candles in the pews this year out of concern that wax drips may damage the fabric on our new pew cushions.

Hymn

337 Silent Night, Holy Night

- 1 **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.

- 2 **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!

- 3 **Silent night, holy night!**
Son of God, love's pure light
radiant beams from thy holy face
with the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth,
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth.

Text: tr. John F. Young, 1820–1885; Franz Joseph Mohr, 1792–1848; Public domain

Be seated



News & Announcements



HOLIDAY WORSHIP SCHEDULE

Dec. 25 - Christmas Day Service at 9:30 am
Dec. 29 - Sunday Worship at 8:00 & 10:30 am
Dec. 31 - New Year's Eve Service at 6:30 pm



Want to Learn More?

Begins Jan. 25

We have a workshop-style class beginning in a couple of weeks that explains what the Bible teaches about God and your relationship to him. Whether you have been worshipping with us for a while or this is your first visit, we invite you to come Saturday mornings, Jan. 25, Feb. 8, Feb. 22 and Mar. 8. If you are interested, please contact Pastor Plagenz for more information: pastorplagenz@stpaulswr.org or 920-689-3036.

K for a Day

Jan. 15 | 8:30 am

If your child will be in Kindergarten next year, we encourage you to bring them to “K for a Day” on Wednesday, Jan. 15. That morning they can experience the classroom and meet the teacher. Activities begin at 8:30 am and finish up at 11:30 am.

St. Paul's Is 125 Years Old

Join us for a special anniversary celebration on Sunday, Jan. 26. We will have only one combined service that day at 10:00 am. A catered luncheon will be served at 11:30 am. Your RSVP is needed by Jan. 12. There is a cost to the meal. See the Ministry Table for more details.

New Pictorial Directory

In conjunction with the anniversary, we are publishing a new church directory. The professional photo sessions, are free and you will receive a free portrait for participating. See the display in the Welcome Center for more information or look for a link on our website.

Pick Up Your Offering Envelopes

Members, your 2025 contribution envelopes are in your mail slots. Please do not start to use these envelopes until Sunday, Jan. 3, 2025.

Upcoming Events

Jan. 2	School Resumes
Jan. 15	K for a Day (Kindergarten Roundup)
Jan. 26	125 th Church Anniversary – Only one service at 10:00 am
Feb. 6	Photo Sessions Begin for Church Directory





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