

A Mission Congregation of the ELCA
Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church
P. O. Box 64 - 8520 Oakes Rd - Pittsburg, Ohio 45358

The Nativity of Our Lord Jesus
December 24, 2023
4:00 and 10:00 PM Services



Luke 2:1-20



Scan with your Smartphone and link to our web page, our Facebook page, and our YouTube Channel.



• **PRELUDE**

Roxanne Groff

• **WELCOME**

Pr Mel Musser

• **LIGHTING THE ADVENT CANDLES**

R: *(light candle 1)* This is the candle of hope, and it illuminates God's promise.

C: *(light candle 2)* This is the candle of love, and its light leads us in God's way.

R: *(light candle 3)* This is the candle of joy, and it shows us God's healing and wholeness.

R: *(light candle 4)* This is the candle of peace, and it proclaims Christ's coming reign of justice, when we will make war no more.

C: *(light candle 5)* **This is the Christ candle, and its light declares that he is here among us now. Thanks be to God.**

* **CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS**

All may make the sign of the cross, the sign marked at baptism...

P: We confess our sins before God and one another.

Pause for silence and reflection.

L: Ever Present God,

C: **We come before you in need of grace. Too often our thoughts are judgmental and condemning of others. Too often our words are sarcastic or harsh, as harmful as weapons. Too often our actions are motivated by selfishness, and we do not recognize the hurt or need in others. Forgive us, O God, and draw us back into right relationship with you, our neighbors, and your creation.**

L: The promise is sure: Christ is among us, and in Christ we are forgiven all our sin. Know that you are a beloved child of God, and be strengthened in all goodness.

C: **Amen.**

* = Please stand if able

• = Please be seated

* **GATHERING SONG** “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing”

LBW 60



1 Hark! The her - ald an - gels sing, “Glo - ry to the new - born king;
2 Christ, by high - est heav’n a - dored, Christ, the ev - er - last - ing Lord,
3 Hail the heav’n - born Prince of peace! Hail the Sun of righ - teous - ness!



peace on earth, and mer - cy mild, God and sin - ners rec - on - ciled.”
late in time be - hold him come, off - spring of a vir - gin’s womb.
Light and life to all he brings, ris’n with heal - ing in his wings.



Joy - ful, all you na - tions, rise; join the tri - umph of the skies;
Veiled in flesh the God - head see! Hail, in - car - nate de - i - ty!
Mild he lays his glo - ry by, born that we no more may die,



with an - gel - ic hosts pro - claim, “Christ is born in Beth - le - hem!”
Pleased as man with us to dwell, Je - sus, our Em - man - u - el!
born to raise each child of earth, born to give us sec - ond birth.



Hark! The her - ald an - gels sing, “Glo - ry to the new - born king!”

* **APOSTOLIC 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.

* **PRAYER OF THE DAY**

P: God of mystery and grace, you came to us not in power and might, not with armies of angels or men, but as a vulnerable baby in an animal’s stall. Teach us the transformative power of your loving and peaceful way, that we might work for your justice in the world.

C: Amen.

• **WORD OF GOD**

P: The Gospel according to Saint Luke the 2nd Chapter...

C: Glory to You, O Lord

R: In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. ²This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³All went to their own towns to be registered. ⁴Joseph 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. ⁵He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. ⁶While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. ⁷And 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.

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.

P: This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C: Praise to You, O Christ

- **MESSAGE**

Pr Mel

Grace and peace to you from the Creator of the Universe who we can see in the baby in a manger, amen.

(SLIDE) Merry Christmas! It's finally here. Do you have all your gifts wrapped yet? If you do, I'm sure you went through a lot of of scotch tape. The Brand-Named Scotch Tape was made by the 3M Company. (SLIDE) 3M started out in 1903 as the Minnesota Mining and Manufacturing Company. Today, they make over 60,000 different products. Besides Scotch Tape, 3M makes audio-visual equipment and media, medical and dental products, reflective coatings, and Post-It Notes. 3M makes a lot of stuff. Maybe we can imagine a different meaning behind 3M. What if the real 3Ms of Christmas stands for Magic, Mystery, and Miracle. (SLIDE) In the manger we can see all three M's, the Magic, the Mystery, and the Miracle of God with us. Let's look at each one, starting with the magic of Christmas.

Christmas is a magical time. The whole season is like riding on a "magic" carpet. (SLIDE) We're flying towards a destination we hope will bring us joy. Advent's been a time of waiting, a time of deferred gratification. We've been traveling towards Christmas for weeks now and it's finally here! We've been watching the Christmas lights going up all over town. Downtown Greenville is always so beautiful this time of year. (SLIDE) (By the way we should all drive by Portia's home. The pictures I've seen of Facebook are incredible. Great job

Portia!) Besides all the Christmas lights, cards and letters or emails have been written. All the children are hoping their special gift will appear under the tree. We've sung Christmas carols, made the fudge and candies, prepared special meals, made Christmas cookies, and many other goodies that only come this time of the year. Our taste buds wait for the magic on our tongues. At our house tomorrow we'll once again have a delicious roast beast and all the trimmings. It's a magical time of year, but the real magic of Christmas is the magic of joy and generosity that grows and grows this time of year. It was truly amazing to see that joy find expression as people came up to put a buck or two in the blue buckets. There's no shortage of magic happening right here among us here in Darke County...

The mystery of Christmas is the greatest mystery ever. We celebrate Immanuel which means God with us. (SLIDE) The Divine Creator, the very Word of God is born and becomes flesh and bones, as a tiny baby. Almighty (God) appeared on earth as a helpless human baby, needing to be fed and changed and taught to walk and talk like any other child. The more you think about it, the more mind bending it gets. I mean God had to sort of set aside a portion of himself in order to make room to create the universe. In my mind I picture God sucking in his tummy to make room for all of us and everything else. Now, somehow and for some reason, God decided to enter into the creation He previously had to limit himself to create. Nothing in fiction is so fantastic as this truth of the Incarnation of Jesus. How can God, the creator of all things, become part of His own creation

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and why would God do that for the likes of me, and you?... I hope you didn't come here tonight thinking I was going to give you an answer to that question. All I can say is, it's a mystery to me!

This is the night of magic, of mystery, and of miracle so, let's turn to the sheer miracle of this night. Some say it's a miracle we made it to Church tonight... (SLIDE) Most likely they're referring to how hard it is to get the kids up, dressed and out the door in time to get to church before the Gathering Hymn is over... The truth is it's a marvelous miracle in more ways than one. I mean it really is a miracle you're here at all. Without God's Holy Spirit tugging at your heart, why would you take this time on the busiest day of the year to stop everything, put on your best, and venture out on this winter's evening/night. It's also a miracle this tiny Church survived so many tough, tough years. It's a miracle the story of Jesus made it through all these years without being snuffed out by persecution. It's a miracle people risked their lives to pass on this totally miraculous story at all. Yes, for sure it's a miracle that God raised Jesus from the dead, and last, but certainly not least, it's a miracle that Jesus was born at all. Yes, Christmas is certainly a miracle. (SLIDE)

This magical, mysterious, and miraculous night changed the world 2000 years ago. Jesus was born on this night in order to take away the sin of the world. In our society, there's two great religious holidays—Christmas and Easter. The green wreath of Christmas is juxtaposed to the crown of thorns of Good Friday.

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(SLIDE) Creator of the Universe invaded our world in the form of a tiny baby boy, but that wasn't the end of His mission. The wood of the cradle without the wood of the cross misses the true meaning of Christmas. (SLIDE) Bethlehem and Calvary, the Manger and the Cross, the birth and the death of Jesus must always be seen together, if the real Christmas is to survive.

Christmas is the most exciting season of the year. It's the time when we gather with family and friends. We sing. We celebrate. We laugh. We exchange presents. For children and most adults, Christmas is the climax of the whole year. And Easter? For most people it's just another long weekend, a break in the dreary stretch between Christmas and summer vacation. It's a great time for spring break... It's the great miracle of the resurrection of Jesus from death and the grave on Easter that gives Christmas its true meaning. If Easter had not happened, Christmas would be nothing more than a sweet-sounding fable. If Easter isn't true, then Christmas is only the story of an obscure baby born in an out-of-the-way town in a forgotten land 2000 years ago. Something extraordinary about one baby, born in Bethlehem to a set of parents, Mary and Joseph. That baby—and no other baby—was God, the Creator of the Universe, born in human flesh. (SLIDE) If that isn't magical, mysterious, and Miraculous, my name isn't Mel Musser.

When it comes to Christmas, we confess that behind the carols and candy, behind the decorations and the parties, behind all the concerts and all the sermons; behind all of it lies an undeniable historical truth: that just over 2000 years ago the

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Word of God, became a human being in the person of his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. We not only believe it – We’ve staked our lives upon it. I mean, this birth of Jesus in Bethlehem is the hinge point of history.

For most of us human beings, our heart longs for peace and harmony. We need peace with our Creator because we’ve broken commandments left and right and this reality keeps us alienated from one another and our Creator.

Reconciliation is what we need. (SLIDE) Reconciliation means friendship and relationship is restored is restored. The infant placed in the cradle, who was given the name Jesus accomplished what we could never do. His nail pierced hands and his death paid the price for our reconciliation. (SLIDE) He restores our lost friendship with our Creator. Because of and only because of the blood and righteousness of Jesus are we forgiven and made into God’s people. That’s all God’s doing and our receiving. And so we can sing “Hark the herald angels sing, God and sinners reconciled.”

Something special happened that first Christmas. The Creator of the Universe decided to rewrite your story. Because you were born sinful, even if you could keep all the commandment perfectly, in all the spirit and intent of the Law you’re still sin stained by your birth as a sinful human being. As a result, your story called for death, but now the death sentence falls on Jesus and He has already died in your place. The magic, mystery, and miracle of Christmas is the beginning

of a life that would change the ending of your story and the stories of all who are covered by the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

(SLIDE) May your whole life be filled with the magic, mystery, and miracles of the story of the Word becoming a human being. This Christmas, may God us all with his joy and peace. Merry Christmas. Thanks be to God. Amen.

Silence for reflection may follow.

- **Special Music** **“When Love Was Born”** **Larry Harter**

*** NICENE CREED**

The Nicene Creed is said on all festivals and on Sundays in the seasons of Advent, Christmas, Lent, and Easter. The Apostles’ Creed is said at other times. The Creed is omitted here if the service of Holy Baptism or another rite with a creed is used.

C: We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven; by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate from the virgin Mary, and was made man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified. He has spoken through the prophets. We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

**Or, He descended to the dead.*

*** PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

L: With confidence in your promises kept, we pray for the church, the world, and all in need.

A brief silence.

L: God with us, we rejoice with the angels at the birth of your son, Jesus Christ, through whom we, too are given new birth. Keep us ever mindful of your eternal presence with us. God of Promise,

C: In mercy, hear our prayer.

L: Through Jesus, you spoke all of creation into being. In love for him, make us to work for the preservation of all that you have made. God of Promise,

C: In mercy, hear our prayer.

L: You remade the world through the birth of a fragile, human baby. Inspire all our leaders by this act of humility to strive for change through powerful but peaceful means. God of Promise,

C: In mercy, hear our prayer.

L: Bring comfort to those who have been diagnosed with life-threatening illness, or who need surgery or other invasive treatments, (*especially...*) Assure them of your presence with them through all things. God of Promise,

C: In mercy, hear our prayer.

L: Pull the powerful down from their thrones, uplift the lowly, and fill the hungry with good things. Make us agents of your world-transforming work that all might experience equity and justice in your name. God of Promise,

C: In mercy, hear our prayer.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

L: With joy we remember those who have gone before us to the manger and who lovingly took our hands and led us there, too. May we, in turn, lead still others to receive your most precious gift. God of Promise,

C: In mercy, hear our prayer.

L: We lift all our prayers, spoken and unspoken, into your loving arms, trusting in your love and mercy, through Jesus Christ, our Savior. Amen.

C: Amen.

*** SHARING OF THE PEACE**

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

C: And also with you.

* = Please stand if able
• = Please be seated

• OFFERING

The Offering is received as the Lord's table is prepared.

* CONGREGATIONAL OFFERTORY

“Let the Vineyards”



Let the vine - yards be fruit - ful, Lord, and fill to the brim our



cup of bless - ing. Gath - er a har - vest from the



seeds that were sown, that we may be fed with the bread of life.



Gath - er the hopes and the dreams of all; u - nite them with the



prayers we of - fer now. Grace our ta - ble with your



pres - ence, and give us a fore - taste of the feast to come.

* OFFERING PRAYER

P: God, we can think of no greater gift to us than Jesus. In awe and gratitude, we respond with our offerings out of the abundance you have provided in our lives. Use them for the good of the world.

C: Amen.

THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

Communion is by Station. All the Baptized are welcome to celebrate this Holy Meal.

- * = Please stand if able
- = Please be seated

* **DIALOGUE**

Ⓟ The Lord be with you. ☩ And al - so 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 him thanks and praise.

* **THE PREFACE**

P: It is indeed right and salutary that we should at all times and in all places offer thanks and praise to you, O Lord, holy Father, through Christ our Lord. 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 the Church on earth and the hosts of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

* **THE SANCTUS**

☩ Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow'r and might:

Heav - en and earth are full of your glo - ry. Ho - san - na. Ho - san - na.

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.

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*** EUCHARISTIC PRAYER**

P: Holy God, Creator of all and Source of life, at the birth of time your word brought light into the world. In the fullness of time, you sent your Word, born of Mary, to shine in our darkness and to make us your daughters and sons. 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.

Remembering, therefore, his birth and life among us, his death and resurrection, we await his coming again when all things will be restored in him. By your Spirit bless us and this bread and cup, that, held and nourished by you, we may live as your children, shining with the light of your Son. Through him all glory and honor is yours, Almighty Father, with the Holy Spirit, in your holy Church, both now and forever.

C: Amen.

*** THE LORD'S PRAYER**

P: United into one through this heavenly food, we pray as Jesus taught...

C: 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.

*** INVITATION TO COMMUNION**

P: The infant in the manger became our leader and teacher, and gave his life for the sake of all creation. He invites you now to this table, to share in the bread and wine that makes us one. Come to the feast.

• COMMUNION DISTRIBUTION

The Communion follows. The bread may be broken for distribution. As the ministers give the bread and wine, they say these words to each communicant:

The body of Christ, given for you.

The blood of Christ, shed for you.

The communicant may say: Amen.

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*** POST COMMUNION CANTICLE**



☒ Thank the Lord and sing his praise; tell ev-'ry-one what he has done.



Let all who seek the Lord re - jice and proud-ly bear his name.



He re-calls his prom-is - es and leads his peo-ple forth in joy with



shouts of thanks-giv - ing. Al - le - lu - ia. Al - le - lu - ia.

*** POST COMMUNION BLESSING**

P: May this Body and Blood of our Savior Lord Jesus strengthen, keep, and unite us, now and forever, amen.

*** POST COMMUNION PRAYER**

P: Let us pray... On this day, O God, you gave us Christ the Son to save us. As you sent the one foretold, send us now with good news for all people. Let the gladness of this feast have no end as we share with others the joy that fills us; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

C: Amen.

*** LIGHTING OF THE CANDLES**

The Pastor and Acolyte will distribute the flame from the Altar Candles down the center aisle and the congregation will pass the flame from the center aisle outward. Unlit candles lean to lighted candles so as not to drip hot wax. The overhead lights are dimmed as the candles are lighted. When all candles are lit and the only light in the sanctuary, the congregation will sing Silent Night.

Lighted Candles Hymn

“Silent 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 your holy face, with the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at your birth, Jesus, Lord, at your birth.

The candles are extinguished and the lights are restored in the sanctuary once again.

• **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

* **BLESSING**

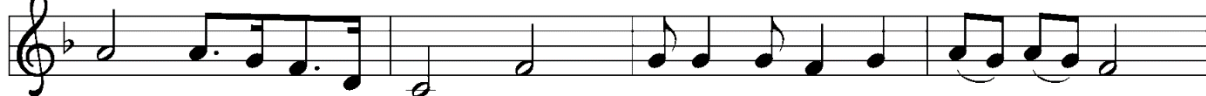
P: May Christ, who by his incarnation has filled us with grace and truth, give you peace this Christmas and always. Almighty God, Father, ✝ Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever.

C: **Amen**

* **SENDING SONG “Go Tell It On The Mountain”**

LBW 70

Refrain



Go tell it on the moun - tain, o-ver the hills and ev - 'ry - where;



go tell it on the moun - tain that Je - sus Christ is born!



- 1 While shep-herds kept their watch-ing o'er si - lent flocks by night,
- 2 The shep-herds feared and trem-bled when, lo, a - bove the earth
- 3 Down in a lone - ly man - ger the hum-ble Christ was born;

Refrain



be - hold, through-out the heav-ens there shone a ho - ly light.
rang out the an - gel cho - rus that hailed our Sav - ior's birth.
and God sent us sal - va - tion that bless-ed Christ-mas morn.

* **DISMISSAL**

P: Thank you all for joining us to worship our great and gracious God! Thanks also to our Facebook and other social media viewers for joining us as well. We're glad you're with us today. Until the next time we gather together as God's people to offer our worship and praise, depart in Christ's Love.

C: Seeking, welcoming, and serving all. Amen!

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Trinity Worship Assistants and Staff

Ministers	All the People of Trinity
Lector – 4 pm	Eldon Erdmann
Lector – 10 pm	Robby Arling
Musician	Roxanne Groff
Acolyte – 4pm	
Acolyte – 10 pm	
Parrish Nurse	PJ Musser
Custodians	Mark Groff
Secretary	Sharon Fourman
Facebook Live Recorder	PJ Musser
Altar Flowers	Given by Caleb & Morgan Custer in celebration of Christ’s birth.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 31st – We will have an “Open Mic” morning! Any individual or group wishing to share vocal or instrumental Christmas songs will be welcome to the mic! Please tell Pastor Mel if you would like to provide something that morning. We will also sing some of your favorite Christmas hymns.

AND on December 31st, you are invited to wear your “**Ugly Christmas Sweater**”.



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