

Messiah Lutheran Church
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Messiah office: Closed December 24 – 31
Messiah phone messages and emails will be checked daily

Worship for Christmas Eve, December 24, 2021 @ 7:30pm
Candlelight Service – The A B C's of Christmas

Worship Services: In person and live broadcast on-line, begins at 10:30am each Sunday. The wearing of masks is mandatory, and Covid vaccinations and hand sanitizing are encouraged. Offering is collected as you enter the Sanctuary. The service is taped for later viewing on the Messiah website.

- December 25 @ 10:30am - Christmas Day Service (no live stream) with Holy Communion
- December 26 @ 10:30am – 1st Sunday of Christmas

Prayers for Healing and On-Going Health Concerns:

We pray for comfort and healing for all those who are suffering in body, mind, or spirit; give them courage and hope in their time of need.



Memorial Christmas Tree: REMEMBERING: During Advent & Christmas, poinsettias are provided to hang on the Memorial Christmas Tree. You can also write the names of those you wish to remember on the attached card. After Christmas, the decorations will be available to take home. If you will not be into Messiah and would like a decoration prepared, please contact the office with your information.



Mitten Tree: Two boxes have been set up for the "mitten tree" collection of mitts, toques, scarfs and gloves, in the Narthex and in the entry by the office. After Christmas, these articles will be given to a community school for children without these necessities.

Food Bank Donations: Food and other items can be brought to Messiah, and will be donated to the Food Bank. A handout with food suggestions can be picked up in the Narthex.

POINSETTIA'S HONORING THE MEMORY OF LOVED ONES



Ed & Trudy Bowen (Colleen Bowen's parents)

Sulo Koivu (Pastor Fran's Grandpa)

Jolene Mayer (Donna Deobald)

Janet Wahn, John & Barb Meyers (Craig & Sue Meyers' parents)

Judy Haight (Lisa Haight's Mother)

Ervin Bauer (Myrtle Bauer's husband & Cheryl Bauer Hyde's Dad)

Jack & Fran Hyde (Wayne Hyde's parents)



...the blessing of Immanuel - Christ with us!
Wherever we are, no matter the circumstances, He is there.



"Remember the comfort of Christ in all darkest points, adorned in 'darkness' tonight!"

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GATHERING

The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God.

PRE-SERVICE MUSIC – the Bratvold Family

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

INTRODUCTION

LIGHTING THE ADVENT WREATH

Tonight, we light all the candles on the Advent Wreath. The first candle reminds us to recapture the wonder of the season. In the midst of repeated refrains and familiar stories, Advent is a time to be awed by the God who came to restore our world. The second candle calls us to remember the promises of old, that from the dawn of creation all things have unfolded according to God's redemptive plan. The third candle calls us to listen to the God who still speaks to us today. Advent is a time to hear afresh the joy of God's reconciling love that beckons us homeward. The fourth candle calls us to reawaken our sense of expectation and behold the miraculous in our day and time. Tonight, we light the Christ candle, rejoicing in the Good News of the holy birth, the hope of humanity and the light of the world.

Let us pray: Gracious God, thank you for guiding us throughout this season of wonder. We stand amazed at the promise now fulfilled and awed by your humble birth. Help us receive, again, the joy and wonder of the greatest gift offered to the world. We pray this in the name of Jesus Christ, our newborn King. Amen.

(all four Advent candles are lit, as well as the white candle in the centre and the Christ candle)

GATHERING HYMN: ELW#283 "O Come, All Ye Faithful"

THE ABC'S OF CHRISTMAS

A is for ANGEL.

The ANGEL (Hallelujah!) Gabriel began the story by telling Mary, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." ²⁹ But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰ The ANGEL (Hallelujah!) said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹ And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. ³² He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. ³³ He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." Luke 1:28-33.

B is for Bethlehem, where our story takes place. People traveled from far and wide to get to Bethlehem, which was not a very big village.

C is for Census, which means an official counting of all the people. The reason so many people came to Bethlehem.

D is for Donkey. A donkey carried the family on their long journey. Mary and Joseph had to travel 172 kilometers along the Jordan River to get from Nazareth to Bethlehem. That's a pretty long journey.

E is for Exhausted. That's how everyone must have felt when they arrived. It would take about 36 hours of walking to go that far. That's three days in a row of doing nothing but walking.

HYMN: ELW#279 "O Little Town of Bethlehem"

Reader 1:

F is for Family. Mary and Joseph and their new baby Jesus created a new family, one that would bless the whole world.

A reading from Luke 2:6-8:

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."

G is for the Good News about to be shared with all the earth. This is what then happened:

A reading from Luke 2: 10-14:

¹⁰But the ANGEL (Hallelujah!) 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 (Hallelujah!) 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!"

Candles are lit now for the Angels (Hallelujah!).

HYMN: ELW #270 "Hark the Herald Angels Sing"

Reader 2:

H is for Hope. Hope is knowing that good news is coming, even when things look bleak. Jesus is the source of our hope.

I is for Imagine. If we close our eyes and imagine the scene, we can see the beauty and wonder of the ANGELS (Hallelujah!) proclaiming good news to all people. We can see the SHEPHERDS (Let's go!), first terrified, but then overcome with joy as they hear the good news. If we try even harder, we can imagine a world where God's peace reigns, where there is no war or hunger. And if we can imagine it, we can do it with God's help.

I is also for the Innkeepers (Yes, there's room for Jesus!) who provided a humble space for Mary, Joseph and the baby Jesus.

Candles are lit now for the Innkeepers (Yes, there's room for Jesus).

HYMN#294 "In the Bleak Mid-Winter"

A CHRISTMAS MESSAGE - Pastor Fran

Reader 3:

J is for Joy. Joy is a kind of happiness that comes from God. It cannot be dampened, and is always shared. The birth of Jesus gives us joy.

K is for King. Though Jesus would be King, he was not the kind of King people were used to. Most kings are born in palaces, surrounded by servants. He was born in a stable, surrounded by dirty, smelly animals. Most kings rule with power and fear. Jesus rules with mercy and love.

L is for Lost. When Jesus grew up, he told a lot of stories, and three of them were about lost things that were found. He loved to find lost things. Jesus finds us, too, when we are lost. Jesus is the good SHEPHERD (Let's go!), who do anything to find his lost sheep.

Candles are lit now for the Shepherds (Let's go!).

HYMN: ELW#289 "Angels We Have Heard on High"

Pastor Fran:

L is also for Love. Jesus summarized his ministry by saying "Love God..." and "Love your neighbor as yourself."

M is for Manger. A manger is usually used to hold food for animals, but this time it held the baby because he had no crib.

N is for Noel. Noel is another word for Christmas. It means new birth, and that's what happened in our story. That's what happens every year at Christmas time. That's what happens every time we decide to follow Jesus – he is born anew in us.

O is for Offering. The WISE ONES (Look, a star!) gave gifts to the baby, and we can offer our gifts every day. We

give our time, our talents, and our treasure to God, and pray that as a Church, we are good stewards of all that is entrusted to us. We share our gifts now as we receive our offering

PRAYER

God strengthens us for the journey.

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

OFFERING PRAYER:

Let us pray: Generous God, you have given us life, this community, and these gifts of the earth that become the meal of your grace. Move in our hearts, that we might use your gifts to bring hope and blessing wherever we go, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

P is for Peace. Jesus is the Prince of Peace, and is the source of the kind of peace that surpasses all understanding. P is also for Prayer. We offer our prayers to you, O God, when we pray at home, when we pray throughout the day and as we offer our prayers of intercession now.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION:

Gathered with all who seek the Christ child, let us pray for the church, the world, and all who are in need, praying Hear us, O God, and responding, Your mercy is great.

A brief silence.

...

Into your gracious hands we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your steadfast mercy; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

Reader 4:

Q is for Quiet. Sometimes we pray in quiet and listen to God speaking to us.

R is for Revealed. Revealed means "showing us something that was once hidden." God revealed to us what love looks like by giving us Jesus. Jesus is love, and reveals to us the way to love one another.

S is for Star. One special star guided WISE ONES (Look, a star!) to come to see the baby. They were mysterious, and they lived far away, but they brought gifts to Jesus because they knew that he would grow up to be a King.

A reading from Matthew 2:9-11:

⁹When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. ¹⁰When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. ¹¹On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and the WISE ONES (Look, a star!) knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

HYMN: ELW#297 "Jesus, What a Wonderful Child" 3X

Reader 5:

T is for Table. When Jesus grew up, he invited all to his table. He gave his friends bread and wine, and told them to remember him always. When we gather at the Lord's Table, we call it Communion because we come together. So, at this table, we also remember the next letter:

U is for Unity. Communion is a time when all people can come together and be one. Just as many grains come together to form one bread. We, who are many people, come together to be one body of Christ.

V is for Vulnerable. Vulnerable means, "able to be hurt." Every baby is very vulnerable, and so are we when we love one another. God became vulnerable when Jesus was born, and we are called to be vulnerable when we love our neighbours as ourselves.

W is for Wonder. Like the WISE ONES (Look, a star!), we stand in awe and wonder of the newborn King. Candles are now lit for the Wise Ones (Look, a star!).

HYMN: ELW#296 "What Child is This"

Pastor Fran:

X is for Christ. X is the Greek letter Chi (pronounced Kye), the first letter in the word "Christ." The X is one of the most ancient symbols of Christianity. People have been using the letter X to stand for Christ for centuries. On this night, we have lit the Christ candle, which symbolizes the light of Christ and the risen Christ. Also known as the Paschal candle, it is lit tonight and on all of the Christ festivals that we celebrate throughout the year

Jesus is born. Hallelujah!

Jesus is with us. Thanks be to God!

Jesus, the light of the world is incarnate for us. Amen! Hallelujah!

Y is for You. You ANGELS (Hallelujah!). You WISE ONES (Look, a star!). You SHEPHERDS (Let's go!). You INNKEEPERS (Yes, there is room for Jesus!). You, sons and daughters. You, mothers and fathers. You, friends and strangers. We are all here to worship and celebrate the birth of Jesus.

Z is for Zeal. Let your zeal for Christ burn brightly. Know that the light of God burns brightly whenever we go. And that we carry that light of Christ within us, for even though these lights will die out, the light of Christ in us is steadfast, and endures forever.

HYMN: ELW#281 "Silent Night"

LORD'S PRAYER

We gather on this silent night and God gathers our prayers with those of every time and every place, and we pray as Jesus taught us... 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.

SENDING

God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world.

BLESSING

Grace from God's own heart, peace from the Child in the manger, and strength from the Spirit of life bless you today and always, in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. ✠ Sung Three-fold Amen.

SENDING HYMN: ELW#267 "Joy to the World"

DISMISSAL

Christ is born! Go tell it on the mountain and everywhere.

Thanks be to God.