

*Prairieland Parish*

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**We Gather to Prepare Our Hearts to Meet Our Lord**

## **A Service of Word, Carols, and Communion**

**Special Music** *“Because He Lives”* Kyle Schroeder

### **\*CALL TO WORSHIP**

Rejoice, for God is with us — Emmanuel.

**In the darkness of our world shines God's holy light.**

Now there is reason to hope, to love, to laugh, to live.

**God is truly with us. We are not alone.**

Thanks be to God!

### **\*UMH # 238 “Angels We Have Heard on High”**

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**1 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!**

**2 Shepherds, why this jubilee?  
Why your joyous strains prolong?  
What the gladsome tidings be  
which inspire your heavenly song? (Refrain)**

**3 Come to Bethlehem and see  
Christ whose birth the angels sing;  
come, adore on bended knee,  
Christ the Lord, the newborn King. (Refrain)**

**4 See him in a manger laid,  
whom the choirs of angels praise;  
Mary, Joseph, lend your aid,  
while our hearts in love we raise. (Refrain)**

**\*OPENING PRAYER**

**Gracious God, with joy and thanksgiving we gather as your people.**

**We have come to hear again the timeless story of Christ's birth.**

**In the excitement of this night, quiet our hearts that we may know the peace and fullness of this holy time. Shine, O Light, in the darkness of our world. Sing, O angels, in the stillness of our hearts, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those God favors." This we pray in the name of the Child of Bethlehem. Amen.**

**The Prophecy of the Messiah**

Isaiah 9:2, 6-7, John 1:1-2, 4-5

[a] 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.

6 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.  
7 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 Became Flesh**

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God.

4 in him was life,[a] and the life was the light of all people. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

**-Lighting of the first Advent candle-**

-A moment of prayer-

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**The Coming of Jesus Is Announced to Mary and Joseph**

Luke 1:26-38, Matthew 1:18-25

Luke 1:26-38

**The Birth of Jesus Foretold**

26 In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth,  
27 to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. 28 And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with

you.”[a] 29 But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. 30 The angel 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.” 34 Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I am a virgin?”[b] 35 The angel said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born[c] will be holy; he will be called Son of God. 36 And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. 37 For nothing will be impossible with God.” 38 Then Mary said, “Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.” Then the angel departed from her.

**Matthew 1:18-25**  
**The Birth of Jesus the Messiah**

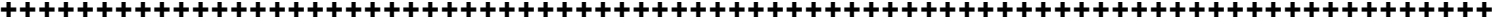
18 Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah[a] took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. 19 Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. 20 But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. 21 She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” 22 All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

23 “Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,  
and they shall name him Emmanuel,”

which means, “God is with us.” 24 When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife, 25 but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son;[b] and he named him Jesus.

**-Lighting of the second Advent Candle-**

-A moment of prayer-



**The Preparations for the Birth of Jesus**

Luke 2:1-5

**Luke 2:1-5**  
**The Birth of Jesus**

2 In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. 2 This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. 3 All went to their own towns to be registered. 4 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. 5 He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child.

**\*UMH #218 "It Came upon the Midnight Clear"**

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**1 It came upon the midnight clear,  
that glorious song of old,  
from angels bending near the earth  
to touch their harps of gold:  
"Peace on the earth, good will to men,  
from heaven's all-gracious King."  
The world in solemn stillness lay,  
to hear the angels sing.**

**2 Still through the cloven skies they come  
with peaceful wings unfurled,  
and still their heavenly music floats  
o'er all the weary world;  
above its sad and lowly plains,  
they bend on hovering wing,  
and ever o'er its Babel sounds  
the blessed angels sing.**

**3 And ye, beneath life's crushing load,  
whose forms are bending low,  
who toil along the climbing way  
with painful steps and slow,  
look now! for glad and golden hours  
come swiftly on the wing.  
O rest beside the weary road,  
and hear the angels sing!**

**4 For lo! the days are hastening on,  
by prophet seen of old,  
when with the ever-circling years  
shall come the time foretold  
when peace shall over all the earth  
its ancient splendors fling,  
and the whole world send back the song  
which now the angels sing.**

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**Jesus is Born  
Luke 2:6-7**

6 While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. 7 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.

-Lighting of the Christ Candle

**UMH #219 “What Child is This”. (remain seated)**

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**1 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?**

**Chorus:  
This, this is Christ, the King,  
Whom shepherds guard and angels sing:  
Haste, haste to bring Him laud,  
The Babe, the Son of Mary!**

**2 Why lies He in such mean estate,  
Where ox and ass are feeding?  
Good Christian, fear: for sinners here  
The silent Word is pleading.[Chorus]**

**3 So bring Him incense, gold, and myrrh,  
Come, peasant, king to own Him.  
The King of kings salvation brings;  
Let loving hearts enthrone Him.[Chorus]**

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**Jesus' Birth is announced to the Shepherds  
Luke 2:9-14**

9 Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 10 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: 11 to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah,[a] the Lord. 12 This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.” 13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host,[b] praising God and saying,

14 “Glory to God in the highest heaven,  
and on earth peace among those whom he favors!”[c]

**UMH # 245 “The First Noel”. (remain seated)**

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**1 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.**

**2 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]**

**3 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]**

**4 This star drew nigh 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]**

**5 Then entered in those Wise Men three,  
full reverently upon the knee,  
and offered there, in his presence,  
their gold and myrrh and frankincense. [Refrain]**

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**The Shepherds find the Baby Jesus**  
**Luke 2:15-18**

15 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." 16 So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. 17 When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; 18 and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them.

**-Lighting of the third Advent candle-**  
-A moment prayer-

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**The Wise Men Bring Their Gifts to Jesus**  
**Matthew 2:1-11**

### **The Visit of the Wise Men**

2 In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men[a] from the East came to Jerusalem, 2 asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising,[b] and have come to pay him homage." 3 When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; 4 and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah[c] was to be born. 5 They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet:

6 'And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,  
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;  
for from you shall come a ruler  
who is to shepherd[d] my people Israel.'"

7 Then Herod secretly called for the wise men[e] and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. 8 Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage." 9 When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising,[f] until it stopped over the place where the child was. 10 When they saw that the star had stopped,[g] they were overwhelmed with joy. 11 On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

**-Lighting of the fourth Advent Candle-**

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**PRAYER OF CONFESSION and PARDON**

**Merciful God, we confess that often we find darkness more comfortable than light. We confess that we find your good news frightening and unsettling, especially when we consider its demands as well as its promises. We confess that Christmas has become more to us than the birthday of the Christ, partly because we do not want a Christ-Child in our lives or in our world. Forgive us, break us, bend us, remake us. Give us the courage to lay ourselves open to the wonder and healing of your coming. Be born again into our world, be born again into our hearts and lives. Hear now our silent and personal confessions as we prepare ourselves for your nativity. The true light that enlightens all has come into the world. That light shines on in the darkness, and the darkness has never been able to put it out. This is the good news: God has heard our confession. God has forgiven our sin. Thanks be to God!**

**THE GREAT THANKSGIVING**

(See insert)

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

**And also with you.**

The Risen Christ is with us.

**Praise the Lord.**

Let us pray:

**Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires known, and from you no secrets are hidden. Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy name, through Christ our Lord. Open our hearts and minds by the power of your Holy Spirit, that, your Word proclaimed, we may hear with joy what you say to us this evening. Amen.**

Let us join our voices together in the Apostles Creed:

**I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth;  
And in Jesus Christ his only Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, dead, and buried; \* the third day he rose from the dead;  
He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty;  
from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic\*\* church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.**

Invitation:

Hear the good news:

Christ died for us while we were yet sinners; that proves God's love toward us. In the name of Jesus Christ you are forgiven!

**In the name of Jesus Christ you are forgiven!  
Glory to God. Amen.**

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you**

Lift up your hearts.

**We lift them up to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

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

It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you, Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth. You formed us in your image and breathed into us the breath of life. When we turned away, and our love failed, your love remained steadfast. You delivered us from captivity, made covenant to be our sovereign God, and spoke to us through your prophets. And so, with your people on earth and all the company of heaven we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory.  
Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.**

Holy are you, and blessed is your Son Jesus Christ. Your Spirit anointed him to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives and recovering sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, and to announce that the time had come when you would save your people. He healed the sick, fed the hungry, and ate with sinners. By the baptism of his suffering, death, and resurrection you gave birth to your church, delivered us from slavery to sin and death, and made with us a new covenant by water and the Spirit. When the Lord Jesus ascended, he promised to be with us always, in the power of your Word and Holy Spirit.

On the night in which he gave himself up for us, he took the bread, gave thanks to you, broke it, and gave it to his disciples and said:

“Take eat; this is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” When the supper was over, he took the cup, gave thanks to you, gave it to his disciples and said:“ Drink from this all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant, poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.”

And so, in remembrance of these your mighty acts in Jesus Christ, we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving as a holy and living sacrifice, in union with Christ's offering for us, as we proclaim the mystery of faith.

**Christ has died, Christ is risen; Christ will come again.**



Pour out you Holy Spirit on us gathered here, and on these gifts of bread and wine. Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ, that we may be for the world the body of Christ, redeemed by His blood.

By your Spirit make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world, until Christ comes in final victory, and we feast at his heavenly banquet. Through you Son Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit in your holy church, all honor and glory is yours, almighty Father, now and forever. Amen.

Now with the confidence of children of God let us pray the prayer Jesus Christ taught us to pray.

## **Sharing of the Elements**

### **\*Offertory/Doxology/Prayer**

*Giving God, as we recount the story of your gift of a Savior on that night long ago, we remember there were some who said, "There's no room", and others who responded, "Come, we'll make room." As we bring our gifts to your altar, which group will be the best fit for each of us? Help us give with a heart of abundance and not one of scarcity! On this holiest of nights, let us dwell with those whose chorus is, "Come, we'll make room...", remembering your abundant love for us. In the name of our Savior and Redeemer, we pray. Amen. (Luke 2:1-14, (15-20))*

### **\*Christmas Eve Benediction**

Tonight, as we celebrate God is with us in the birth of Jesus, let us continue to live lives of hope, peace, joy, and love.

Share God's love with the shepherds you meet on the hillside.

Let the communion of the Holy Spirit fill your heart with glad tidings like the angels.

And the Prince of Peace born again tonight, may He live in your heart to comfort and challenge you as you seek to live as one of his disciples. Amen.

## **THE PASSING OF THE LIGHT**

### **\*UMH # 239 "Silent Night"**

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**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!**

**4 Silent night, holy night!  
Wondrous star, lend thy light.  
With the angels let us sing  
"Alleluia" to our King,  
"Christ the Savior is born,  
Christ the Savior is born."**