

CHRISTMAS EVE
THE *NATIVITY* OF OUR *LORD*
Candlelight Communion Service



TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH AND SCHOOL, MENASHA, WI

CHRISTMAS EVE – CAROLS, CANDLELIGHT, COMMUNION

What is the connection between Christmas, carols, candlelight and Communion?

In the first place, people in Bible times regarded the dusk following sunset to be the beginning of the new day. Liturgical thinking, following the Bible practice, begins a holiday the evening before. All the more in the case of Christmas, where it is clear that the Christ was born at night and the announcement made by the angels was in darkness.

Carols are associated with Christmas and they indeed have originated with the medieval Christmas celebration. Carols, strictly speaking, are songs that celebrate Christmas events sung to a tune in dance meter. It is believed that carols were originally sung by folk dancers who held hands and danced in a circle. It has been claimed that the first carol was the “Gloria in Excelsis” sung by the angels as they danced in a circle in heaven on the first Christmas Eve. In French “carol” is used interchangeably with “noel.” Unlike hymns (songs of praise to God), carols are not “church music;” but those with sound doctrinal content serve as a joyful addition to Christmas worship.

Candlelight is associated with this service because in earlier centuries it was the only time Holy Communion was celebrated at night. The custom for many centuries was to worship in the day when there was light enough to see. But this special exception was made for the midnight celebration of Jesus’ birth. The words from St. John’s Gospel were recalled: “This was the true Light which was coming into the world which enlightens every man.”

Communion was seen as the only fitting way to celebrate the birth of our Lord for many centuries. In fact, “Christmas” comes from the term Christ’s Mass, the “mass” being the service of Holy Communion celebrated in honor of Christ’s birth. Those who think of Holy Communion as primarily a memorial of Jesus’ death might not see the connection between Jesus’ birth and the Sacrament. However, Christmas is the celebration of God becoming man in Jesus Christ. He Who became flesh to redeem us body and soul gives His body with the bread. The two lit candles on every Communion altar point to this truth, that in Holy Communion Christ’s human nature makes it possible for us to receive His body and blood, and His Divine nature makes it possible for us to receive it at every Christian altar wherever the Sacrament is celebrated according to His institution. The Christmas myth that St. Nicholas brings gifts to all good children in one night was inspired by the Christian truth that the Savior blesses His people with eternal grace in the Christmas Communion.

**THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD
CHRISTMAS EVE
11:00 PM**

PRE-SERVICE MUSIC

- P** Let us go even unto Bethlehem
C **To see this thing which the Lord hath made known unto us.**

Stand

PROCESSIONAL HYMN - *It Came upon the Midnight Clear* - LSB 366, st. 1-3

- 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, goodwill to all, From heav'n'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 heav'nly music floats O'er all the weary world.
Above its sad and lowly plains They bend on hov'ring wing,
And ever o'er its babel sounds The blessèd angels sing.
- 3 All you, beneath your heavy load, By care and guilt bent low,
Who toil along a dreary way With painful steps and slow:
Look up, for golden is the hour, Come swiftly on the wing,
The Prince was born to bring you peace; Of Him the angels sing.

INTROIT

Psalm 2:1-2, 4-6; antiphon: Liturgical Text

P When all was still, and it was midnight,
your almighty Word, O Lord, descended from the royal throne.

C **Why do the nations rage
and the peoples plot in vain?**

P The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together,
against the LORD and against his anointed.

C **He who sits in the heavens laughs;
the Lord holds them in derision.**

P Then he will speak to them in his wrath,
and terrify them in his fury, saying,

C **“As for me, I have set my King
on Zion, my holy hill.”**

**ALL: Glory be to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning,
is now, and will be forever. Amen.**

P When all was still, and it was midnight,
your almighty Word, O Lord, descended from the royal throne.

GLORIA - *Angels We Have Heard on High* - LSB 368

1. Angels we have heard on high, Sweetly singing o'er the plains,
And the mountains in reply, Echoing their joyous strains.
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 heav'nly song?
Gloria in excelsis Deo; Gloria in excelsis Deo.
3. Come to Bethlehem and see Him whose birth the angels sing;
Come, adore on bended knee Christ the Lord, the newborn King.
Gloria in excelsis Deo; Gloria in excelsis Deo.

SALUTATION

- P** The Lord be with you.
C **And with your spirit.**

COLLECT

- P** O God, You make this most holy night to shine with the brightness of the true Light. Grant that as we have known the mysteries of that Light on earth we may also come to the fullness of His joys in heaven; through the same Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
C **Amen.**

Be Seated

FIRST LESSON

Isaiah 9:2-7

² The people who walk in darkness Will see a great light; Those who live in a dark land, The light will shine on them. ³ Thou shalt multiply the nation, Thou shalt increase their gladness; They will be glad in Thy presence As with the gladness of harvest, As men rejoice when they divide the spoil. ⁴ For Thou shalt break the yoke of their burden and the staff on their shoulders, The rod of their oppressor, as at the battle of Midian. ⁵ For every boot of the booted warrior in the battle tumult, And cloak rolled in blood, will be for burning, fuel for the fire. ⁶ For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷ There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, On the throne of David and over his kingdom, To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness From then on and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this.

- P** This is the Word of the Lord.
C **Thanks be to God!**

RESPONSORY HYMN - *The People That in Darkness Sat* - LSB 412, st. 1-4

1. The people that in darkness sat A glorious light have seen;
The light has shined on them who long In shades of death have been.
In shades of death have been.
2. To hail you, Sun of Righteousness, The gath'ring nations come;
They joy as when the reapers bear Their harvest treasures home.
Their harvest treasures home.
3. To us the Child of hope is born, To us the Son is giv'n,
And on His shoulder ever rests All pow'r in earth and heav'n.
All pow'r in earth and heav'n.
4. His name shall be the Prince of Peace, The Everlasting Lord,
The Wonderful, the Counselor, The God by all adored.
The God by all adored.

SECOND LESSON

Titus 2:11-14

¹¹ For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, ¹² instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, ¹³ looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus; ¹⁴ who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.

P This is the Word of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God!**

RESPONSORY HYMN - *Joy to the World* - LSB 387, st. 1 & 3

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.
3. 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, Far as, far as the curse is found.

FIRST GOSPEL

Luke 2:1-7

¹ Now it came about in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus, that a census be taken of all the inhabited earth. ² This was the first census taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³ And all were proceeding to register for the census, everyone to his own city. ⁴ And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, ⁵ in order to register, along with Mary, who was engaged to him, and was with child. ⁶ And it came about that while they were there, the days were completed for her to give birth. ⁷ And she gave birth to her first-born son; and she wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

P This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God!**

RESPONSORY HYMN - *Infant Holy, Infant Lowly* - LSB 393

1. Infant holy, Infant lowly, For His bed a cattle stall;
Oxen lowing, Little knowing Christ the child is Lord of all.
Swiftly winging, Angels singing, Bells are ringing, Tidings bringing:
Christ the child is Lord of all! Christ the child is Lord of all!

- Flocks were sleeping, Shepherds keeping Vigil till the morning new
Saw the glory, Heard the story, Tidings of a Gospel true.
Thus rejoicing, Free from sorrow, Praises voicing, Greet the morrow:
Christ the child was born for you! Christ the child was born for you!

SECOND GOSPEL

Luke 2:8-14

⁸ And in the same region there were some shepherds staying out in the fields, and keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹ And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened. ¹⁰ And the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which shall be for all the people; ¹¹ for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. ¹² "And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths, and lying in a manger." ¹³ And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, ¹⁴ "Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased."

P This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God!**

RESPONSORY HYMN - *Hark! The Herald Angels Sing* - LSB 380

- 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 angelic hosts proclaim, "Christ is born in Bethlehem!"
Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King!"
- 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!
Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King!"

3. Hail the heav'n-born Prince of Peace! Hail, the Sun of Righteousness!
Light and life to all He brings, Ris'n with healing in His wings.
Mild he leaves His throne on high, Born that man no more may die;
Born to raise the sons of earth; Born to give them second birth.
Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King!"

THIRD GOSPEL

Luke 2:15-20

¹⁵ And it came about when the angels had gone away from them into heaven, that the shepherds began saying to one another, "Let us go straight to Bethlehem then, and see this thing that has happened which the Lord has made known to us." ¹⁶ And they came in haste and found their way to Mary and Joseph, and the baby as He lay in the manger. ¹⁷ And when they had seen this, they made known the statement which had been told them about this Child. ¹⁸ And all who heard it wondered at the things which were told them by the shepherds. ¹⁹ But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. ²⁰ And the shepherds went back, glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen, just as had been told them.

P This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God!**

RESPONSORY HYMN - *Gentle Mary Laid Her Child* - LSB 374

1. Gentle Mary laid her Child Lowly in a manger;
There He lay, the Undefined, To the world a stranger.
Such a Babe in such a place, Can He be the Savior?
Ask the saved of all the race Who have found His favor.
2. Angels sang about His birth, Wise Men sought and found Him;
Heaven's star shone brightly forth Glory all around Him.
Shepherds saw the wondrous sight, Heard the angels singing;
All the plains were lit that night, All the hills were ringing.

3. Gentle Mary laid her Child Lowly in a manger;
He is still the Undefined But no more a stranger.
Son of God of humble birth, Beautiful the story;
Praise His name in all the earth; Hail the King of glory!

CHRISTMAS MEDITATION

RESPONSORY HYMN - *Go Tell It on the Mountain* - LSB 388

Refrain:

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 lonely manger The humble Christ was born;
And God sent us salvation That blessèd Christmas morn. *Refrain.*

Stand

NICENE CREED

ALL: I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of His Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made; Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried; And the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of the Father; And He will come again with glory to judge both the living and the dead; whose kingdom will have no end.

And I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified, who spoke by the prophets. And I believe in one Holy Christian and Apostolic Church. I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins, and I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

OFFERINGS PRESENTED TO THE CHRIST CHILD

PRAYERS

- P** With joy in response to the good news that a Savior is born, let us pray and praise God and join the heavenly song of angels saying, “Glory be to God on high.”
- P** Merciful and loving God, in the birth of Your Son You gave peace on earth. Grant that Your holy Christian Church may rejoice in the gladness of our redemption and treasure all these things in our hearts, that we may join the heavenly song of angels saying,
- C** **Glory be to God on high.**
- P** Give boldness to all pastors of Your Church to proclaim the good news of great joy to all people, that all may join the heavenly song of angels saying,
- C** **Glory be to God on high.**
- P** O God, You gave Your Son to be born for us in lowly circumstances. Remember, we pray, those who have little joy: the homeless, hungry, and oppressed. Give hope to the lonely and shut-in of our parish. Grant peace and healing to the sick and suffering and those in the hospital. Guide the journeys of those who travel. Comfort those who mourn. Create a new and contrite heart in the erring, and faith in those who have not heard the good news. May Your love to us flow through our lives and be a blessing to others so that with us they may join the heavenly song of angels saying,
- C** **Glory be to God on high.**

P Lord God, make a manger in the hearts of all who come to Your altar this day, that they may have a share in the life of Him who came to share our humanity and join the heavenly song of angels saying,

C **Glory be to God on high.**

P In the birth of Your Son, O God, You have clothed us with eternal life. We remember with thanksgiving all those who have died in the faith. Unite our voices with theirs that we may join the heavenly song of angels saying,

C **Glory be to God on high.**

P These prayers and praises we humbly offer to Your throne of grace along with the heavenly song of angels; through Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C **Amen.**

CONFESSION

P God gave His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, to redeem us who fall under the curse of God's Law. You who truly and earnestly repent of your sin, and are in peace and charity with your neighbors; who intend to lead a new life, following the commandments of God, and walking from this time forth in His holy ways; who hold the Evangelical Lutheran faith and are accountable to me as Pastor in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod; draw near with faith and take this Holy Sacrament to your comfort; and make your humble confession to Almighty God. Almighty God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, maker of all things, judge of all men;

C **We acknowledge and confess our many sins which we again and again have committed, by thought, word and deed. We have thought much of ourselves, little of our neighbor, and offended your divine majesty, provoking your righteous anger and indignation against us. We do earnestly repent, and are heartily sorry for these, our misdoings; the consciousness of their guilt is intolerable. Have mercy upon us most merciful Father; for your Son our Lord Jesus Christ's sake, forgive us all that is past; and grant that we may ever hereafter serve and please you in newness of life, to the honor and glory of your name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

P Almighty God our heavenly Father, who of his great mercy has promised forgiveness of sin to all them that with sincere repentance and true faith turn to him; have mercy upon you, pardon ✠ and deliver you from all your sins, confirm and strengthen you in all goodness and bring you to everlasting life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

C **Amen.**

P Hear what comforting words our Savior Christ says to all that truly turn to Him! *“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; not as the world gives, do I give you.”* Let us share the peace of the Lord.

*Stand and greet one or two nearby.
(Peace be with you. And also with you.)*

The Service continues on page 194 in the hymnal with The Sacrament of the Altar.

COMMUNION PREFACE	LSB 194
SANCTUS	LSB 195
LORD’S PRAYER	LSB 196
WORDS OF OUR LORD	LSB 197
PAX DOMINI	LSB 197
AGNUS DEI	LSB 198
DISTRIBUTION	LSB 199

Lo, How a Rose E’er Blooming - LSB 359
O Come, All Ye Faithful - LSB 379
Angels from the Realms of Glory - LSB 367

NUNC DIMITTIS	LSB 199-200
THANKSGIVING	LSB 200
POST-COMMUNION COLLECT	LSB 201
SALUTATION and BENEDICAMUS	LSB 201-202
BENEDICTION	LSB 202

SERVICE OF LIGHT WITH THE LAST GOSPEL

HYMN - *O Gladsome Light* - LSB 888

During the hymn the Pastor lights a candle from the Advent wreath. Ushers light their candles from his, then go to the aisles. Each worshiper lights from the candle next to his. To avoid wax on the floor, lighted candles should not be dipped or tilted.

- P** The Lord be with you.
- C** **And with your spirit.**

- P** The beginning of the Holy Gospel according to St. John.
(All meditate on the mystery of the Word made 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. ³ All things came into being by Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. ⁴ In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. ⁵ And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. ⁶ There came a man, sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷ He came for a witness, that he might bear witness of the light, that all might believe through him. ⁸ He was not the light, but came that he might bear witness of the light. ⁹ There was the true light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man. ¹⁰ He was in the world,

and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. ¹¹ He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. ¹² But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, ¹³ who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. ¹⁴ And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

P This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God!**

RECESSIONAL HYMN - *Silent Night* - LSB 363

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, heavenly 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!

When the lights come back on please extinguish your candle and drop it in the box at the door on your way out. God grant you a very blessed celebration of our Savior's birth!

✠ *Soli Deo Gloria* ✠

