Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

Wednesday December 24th, 2014 7:30 p.m.

Peace Evangelical Lutheran Church
Member of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod

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Richard Wm. Lehmann, pastor
Jonathan Lehmann, keyboard
The nature of the Christmas Eve Candlelight service is one of quiet contemplation over the Incarnation of God in Christ Jesus and the unfathomable love of God to do this for us sinners. With humble amazement we come into God’s house to rejoice in His priceless gift to us, who are so unworthy of it. Jesus was born to suffer and die for our sins, to achieve reconciliation between holy God and us sinners, and to ransom us from eternal death. And, in being among us, He also taught the light of God’s truths.

On Christmas Day the tone of Christmas worship changes from that of quiet contemplation to joyful and glorious proclamations and songs of the newborn Prince of Peace. God’s people, around the world, exult in God’s faithfulness to His promise of a Deliverer and anticipate that Christ will come again, not in a lowly manger, but as the King of kings and Lord of lords on the Last Day.

Pre-Service Music

Welcome

Ceremonial Rite of the Lighting of the Advent Wreath

- The Prophecy Candle (blue)
- The Bethlehem Candle (blue)
- The Angels’ Candle (rose)
- The Shepherds’ Candle (blue)
- The Christ Candle (white)

(An usher will come forward to light the five candles as we speak the following verses:)

Minister:
This night a wondrous revelation makes known to us God’s love and grace.
The Child that merits adoration brings light to our benighted race.
And though a thousand suns did shine, still brighter were that Light divine.

Choir:
This “Sun of Grace” for us is beaming! Let us rejoice in Jesus’ birth!
The light from yonder manger streaming sends forth its rays o’er all the earth.
It drives the night of sin away and turns our darkness into day.

Congregation:
O Jesus, precious Sun of Gladness, fill up our souls with Light divine.
Dispel the gloomy night of sadness and teach us all this Christmas-time
How we, aglow with Your own love, may sing with angel hosts above!

M: We worship...
in the name of the Heavenly Father who sent us His eternal Son as the Prince of Peace,
in the name of the Eternal Son, the Prince of Peace come among us in actual flesh, and
in the name of the Holy Spirit, who “overshadowed” the virgin Mary that she might bear
the Prince of Peace in the flesh.  Congregation:  Amen.

Prayer  (based on CW#46)
Your ransomed ones, dear Lord, are we who come Your lowly bed to see;
Enlighten ev’ry soul and mind that we the way to You may find.
And draw us wholly to You, Lord; to us and all Your grace accord.
True faith and love to us impart that we may hold You in our heart
until at last we, too, proclaim—with all Your saints—Your glorious name!
In paradise our songs renew and praise You as the angels do!
Congregation:(spoken)  Amen.

Opening Hymn: ♫ CW#55 Oh, Come, All Ye Faithful

The Christmas Eve Old Testament Reading  Isaiah 9:2-7
The people of Judah had a king (Ahaz), but they needed a change for the better. Their earthly king had failed them spiritually and politically. His reign brought them closer to loss and destruction. Their predicament pictures mankind’s dilemma under the reign of sin. The prophet Isaiah, however, points God’s people to a future where everything changes. They were oppressed and afflicted, lost in the dark, when suddenly, the light of a new dawn breaks over them. In this “new day” (of heaven) they see that everything is changed. No longer will they be enslaved, hungry, fearful, defeated, and broken. Instead the people will rejoice with joy that comes from the kind of abundance found only in harvest or conquest. How can God do all this? In a most improbable manner: A Child is coming who would end wars and build an eternal kingdom on righteousness and justice. How could a Child do that? Because He is nothing less than the Wonderful Counselor, mighty God, Everlasting Father (in the sense of His caring love), and the Prince of Peace!

The people walking in darkness have seen a great Light;
on those living in the land of the shadow of death a Light has dawned.

You have enlarged the nation and increased their joy;
they rejoice before You as people rejoice at the harvest,
as warriors rejoice when dividing the plunder.

For as in the day of Midian’s defeat, You have shattered the yoke that burdens them, the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor.

Every warrior’s boot used in battle and every garment rolled in blood will be destined for burning—will be fuel for the fire.

For to us a Child is born, to us a Son is given,
and the government will be on His shoulders.
And He will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Of the greatness of His governing and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David’s throne and over His kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this!

Carol of Response: ♫ CW#90 The People That In Darkness Sat

The Christmas Eve Epistle Reading Hebrews 2:14-18

The first three chapters of Hebrews are a highly doctrinal explanation of the person of Christ and the significance of His incarnation. Since this book was written particularly for Jewish Christians, there are numerous references to Old Testament Scriptures prophesying this God-Man nature of the Messiah. And, in coming among us, His specific mission was “to make atonement for the sins of the people.” In other words, Messiah would come and be born in order to suffer for us. He would endure our life of temptation without ever falling into sin. Then He would overcome the powers of Satan and Death to render them helpless over our eternity, a victory which He shares with us through faith in Him. And as this faith dwells within the believer, it results in a life of thankful and obedient love for our Savior, looking to Him for guidance and for strength in times of temptation.

Since the children have flesh and blood, He too shared in their humanity so that by His death He might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil— and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. For surely it is not angels He helps, but Abraham’s descendants. (humans/believers)

For this reason He had to be made like them, fully human in every way, in order that He might become a merciful and faithful High Priest in service to God, and that He might make atonement for the sins of the people. Because He Himself suffered when He was tempted, He is able to help those who are being tempted.
Carol of Response: ♫ Now Praise We Christ, the Holy One (select verses)
—based on CW#38 and 39; by Martin Luther—

He, who Himself all things did make, a servant’s form agreed to take that He, as man, mankind might win and save His creatures from their sin.
The grace and pow’r of God the Lord upon the mother was outpoured;
A virgin pure and undefiled in wondrous way conceived a child.
The noble mother bore a Son—for so did Gabriel’s promise run—and on a manger filled with hay in poverty content He lay.

All honor unto Christ the Lord, eternal and incarnate Word, with Father and with Holy Ghost till time in endless time be lost.


Congregation:
1 In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. 2 (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) 3 And everyone went to his own town to register. 4 So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. 5 He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child.

Choir:
6 While they were there, the time came for the Baby to be born,7 and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped Him in cloths and placed Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

*Congregational Christmas Carol ♫ CW#67 What Child Is This?

Congregation:
8 And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. 9 An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 10 But the angel said to them,

Minister:
"Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. 11 Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; He is Christ the Lord. 12 This will be a sign to you: You will find a Baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

Congregation:
13 Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

EVERYONE
14 "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom His favor rests."

*Christmas Carol ♫ CW#63 v. 1 and 3 Angels We Have Heard On High

Congregation:
15 When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another,
**Choir:**
"Let us go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about!"

**Congregation:**
16 So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the Baby, who was lying in the manger. 17 When they had seen Him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this Child, 18 and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. 19 But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. 20 The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told!

**Chancel Choir:** *In A Lowly Manger Born*.................................*arr. Nancy Raabe*

In a lowly manger born, humble life begun in scorn;
under Joseph’s watchful eye, Jesus grew as you and I.
Knew the sufferings of the weak, knew the patience of the meek,
hungered as but poor folk can—This is He. Behold the Man!

Oh, that I had a thousand voices to praise my God with thousand tongues!
My heart, which in the Lord rejoices, would then proclaim in grateful songs to all, wherever I might be, what great things God has done for me!

Visiting the lone and lost, steadying the tempest-tossed,
giving of Himself in love, calling minds to things above.
Sinners gladly hear His call; publicans before Him fall,
for in Him new life began. This is He. Behold the Man!

Then, to rescue you and me, Jesus died upon the tree.

*(Lower voices singing:  God’s love in Jesus is revealed.)*

See in Him God’s love revealed; by His passion we are healed.
Now He lives in glorious bright, lives again in power and might.
Come and take the path He trod, son of Mary, son of God.

➢ Congregation, please stand to profess our Christian beliefs about the Second Person of the Trinity:

**The Confession of our Faith** (Second Article of the Apostles’ Creed) –

I believe in Jesus Christ, God’s only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From there He will come to judge the living and the dead.

What does this mean?

I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the virgin Mary, is my Lord.

He has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil, not with gold or silver, but with His holy precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death.

All this He did that I should be His own, and live under Him in His kingdom, and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, just as He has risen from death, and lives and rules eternally. This is most certainly true!

➢ The Congregation may be seated:
Hymn-Carol  

**Born to Die**


*tune: Hymn to Joy* by Beethoven

1.  
Hear the angels’ song proclaiming: “Glory to the Lord on high!  
His good will is now revealed,” for His Son was BORN TO DIE.  
Born to die for you, o sinner. Born your Substitute to be.  
Born to live the life you haven’t. Born from sin to set you free.

2.  
Born to conquer death and Satan. Born to live that you might rise.  
Born to rule o’er all creation. Born to take you to the skies.  
Born that you may know His glory. Born that you might sing His praise.  
Born that you can live forever. Therefore, now, your voices raise!

3.  
Join the Wise Men in their worship, coming far to bend the knee,  
giving to Him myrrh, symbolic of His death for you and me.  
Join the angels in their witness. Join the shepherds as they tell.  
Look! Behold, there in the manger, ‘tis the Christ—Immanuel!

**Sermon theme/text:**  
Hebrews 2:14-18 (the Epistle reading)  
*Born to Die* (for us)

**Carol of Response ♫ CW#64**  
Let Us All With Gladsome Voice

**Christmas Eve offering**  
Our Birthday Gift to our Savior-God

During the offering, please sign the Friendship Register at the end of the pew during the offering.

**The Chancel Choir:** (during the offering)

Were You There On That First Christmas Night?..........by Natalie Sleeth

Did you see how they hailed Him King with the gifts so rare that they chose to bring?  
Did you see how they bowed as they praised Him aloud at His birth?

Did you hear how the choirs of angels sang at the glory of the sight?  
Did you hear how the bells of heaven rang all through the night?

Did you know, did you know it was God’s own Son—the salvation of the world begun?  
Did you know it was love that was sent from above to the earth?

**Prayer and Lord’s Prayer** (traditional version)

**The “Service of Lights” Candle-lighting Ceremony**

- **Introduction**
- **Lighting of ushers’ candles from Christ Candle on the Advent Wreath**
- **Passing the Light**  
As ushers take their lighted candles to the congregation, they will light the candles of the worshippers located along the aisle. Each person in pew will then light his/her candle from the person next to them. In order to avoid dripping wax on the floor/pew/clothing, **HOLD ALL LIT CANDLES STRAIGHT UP AND ALLOW THE PERSON WITH THE UNLIT CANDLE TO SLANT HIS/HER CANDLE TOWARDS YOURS TO LIGHT IT.**

- **Scripture Readings** as the candles are being lit.  
You may wait with extinguishing your candles until after the Benediction.

- **Singing of Silent Night ♫ CW#60**
Welcome to our guests or visitors among us. We hope that you’ve been spiritually fed and uplifted in this special service and our opportunity to share our joy with you over Jesus. Join us again!

**Thank yous to our...**

**Keyboardist:** Jonathan Lehmann

**Chancel Choir**

**Ushers:** Terry Meehan & Aaron Wolfgram

**Tomorrow, Dec. 25th** – 9:00 a.m. Christmas Day Song Service

**Sunday, Dec. 28th** – 9:00 a.m. **Wed.-New Year’s Eve, Dec. 31st** – 5:00 p.m. (w. Communion)

Pastor, Deb, and children would like to express a sincere thank-you to all who have given/sent them cards and gifts in this most holy and joyous season for Christians. May our Savior grant you a blessed new year as you allow Him to guide you and encourage you with His words of redemption, reconciliation, peace, forgiveness, eternal salvation, and faithful love in Him!

**Thank you** to all who have helped make our Advent and Christmas preparations uplifting—from decorating our church, to contributing to our festive worship and fellowship, to serving our people in various ways. May you have enjoyed a more enriching preparation to receive your King in all this!

**2015 Offering Envelopes:** Please pick up your offering envelope boxes for next year in the narthex. May the Lord guide and bless you in giving Him planned gifts that demonstrate first-fruit priority for the Lord.

**Annual Reports:** A reminder to all the committees and groups of our congregation to start submitting your reports for our annual meeting in January. These reports need to get to our church office during the first week of January so that the secretary can start compiling them into the Annual Report for this past year.

- Blood Drive on Monday, January 12th, 1-6 p.m.
- The Annual Voters’ meeting will be held Sunday, January 18th, after worship.
**The Lord’s Weeks at Peace December 25th–January 8th**

**Thursday (25th)**  **CHRISTMAS**
9:00 p.m.  **Christmas Day** Service of Nine Lessons and Carols

**Friday (26th)**  The Feast of Stephen, First Christian Martyr; King Wenceslas

**Saturday (27th)**  The Feast of St. John the Apostle
8:00 a.m.  **Men’s Brkfst. Bible Study** @ Citrus Café  *(Genesis 45)*

**Sunday (28th)**  The Commemoration of the “Innocents” and Jesus’ Flight to Egypt
9:00 a.m.  Worship
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NO Sunday School or Adult/Teen Bible Study this Sunday

**Wednesday (31st)**  **New Year’s Eve** - 7th Day of Christmas
5:00 p.m.  **Year End Confessional-Devotional Service with Lord’s Supper**

**-- January 2015 --**

**Thursday (1st)**  **New Year’s Day** - The Naming of Jesus - 8th Day of Christmas
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+NO Thursday service this week+

**Sunday (4th)**  **The 11th Day of Christmas**
9:00 a.m.  Worship
10:30 a.m. Sunday School 12 year old Jesus in the Temple Luke 2:41-52
Adult/Teen Bible Study
+ Reports for “Annual Report” are due from all groups this week. +

**Monday (5th)**  **The 12th/Last Day of Christmas**

**Tuesday (6th)**  **The Epiphany of our Lord – Coming of the Gentile Wise Men**
11:00 a.m.  Ladies Visiting @ Park City  *(hymn study: “We Three Kings of Orient Are”)*
4:30 p.m.  Confirmation classes resume: Catechism I
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Chancel Choir on recess until January 21

**Wednesday (7th)**
9:00 a.m.  Wednesday Bible Readers (starting “Jeremiah”)
4:00 p.m.  Confirmation classes resume: Bible History
7:00 p.m.  Ladies Aid Meeting

**Thursday (8th)**
7:00 p.m.  Worship *(with WELS Connection)*
8:15 p.m.  Bible Study

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The American Atheist Council would have all society think that the story of Jesus’ birth, to be the Savior of the world, is a hoax. If they can convince people it is, and even exhort them not to attend the house of God for worship, they know they’ve yanked people away from the only saving faith. How really nasty and satirical they can be, yet Jesus died for their sins, too. However, heaven is God’s gift only to those who trust in Jesus’ redeeming work and demonstrate that trust with a life of love and thankful obedience to Him.