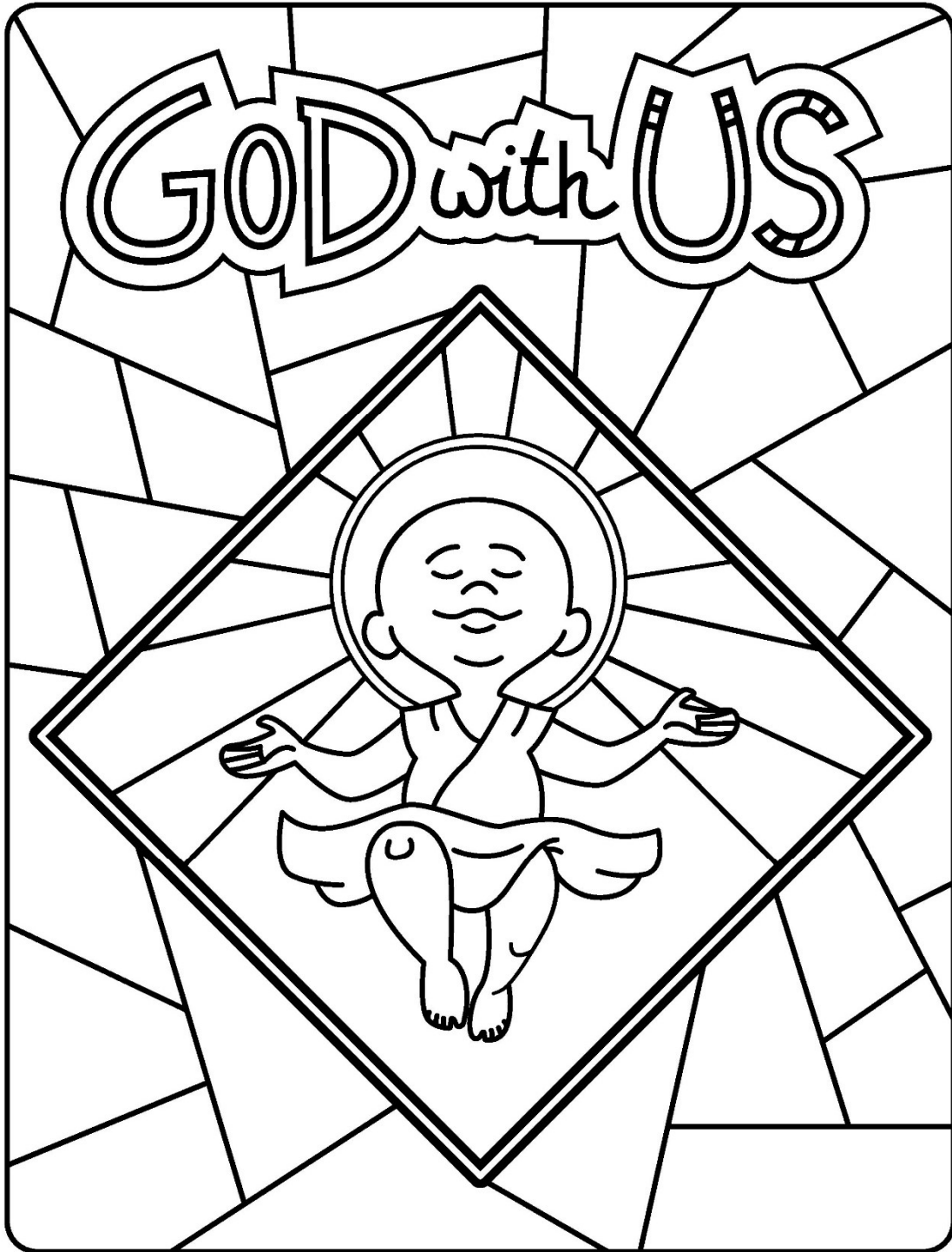


# The Nativity of Our Lord—December 24, 2023



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## **Grace Lutheran's Mission Statement:**

We are a community of believers in Christ called to be servants to all people.

**Prelude**—"The First Noel" arr. John Carter

**Gathering Song**—"O Come, All Ye Faithful" (ELW #283)

O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant!  
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem;  
come and behold him, born the king of angels:  
O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,  
O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord!

The highest, most holy, light of light eternal,  
born of a virgin, a mortal he comes;  
Son of the Father now in flesh appearing!  
O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,  
O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord!

Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation,  
sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!  
Glory to God in the highest:  
O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,  
O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord!

Yea, Lord, we greet thee, born this happy morning;  
Jesus, to thee be glory giv'n!  
Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing:  
O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,  
O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord!

Text: attr. John Francis Wade, 1711-1786; tr. Frederick Oakeley, 1802-1880, sts. 1, 3-4; tr. unknown, st. 2

## **Greeting & Prayer of the Day**

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. **And also with you.**

Almighty God, you made this holy night shine with your radiance. Grant that here on earth we may walk in Jesus' presence and in the last day wake to the brightness of his glory; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

**Song**—"Angels We Have Heard on High" (ELW #289)

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.

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.

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.

Text: French carol; tr. H. F. Hemy, *The Crown of Jesus Music*, 1864

**Pop Up Christmas Play**

by the Rev. Dan Shuttters  
edited by the Rev. CJ Valenti and the Rev. Leslie Weber

**Parts:**

- Joseph: "O Holy Night" (pretend to hold a staff)
- Mary: "Aww" (cradle baby in arms)
- Child: "Love" (one hand over heart other pointing to Jesus)
- Donkey: "HeeHaw"
- Cow: "Mooo"
- Shepherd: "Here sheep" (wave arms)
- Star: "Ooo sparkly!"
- Angel: "Glory to God" (hands stretched out like angel wings)

The story of Christ's birth according to the Gospel of Luke.

In those days, a law was passed by the Emperor Augustus that a census of the whole world should be taken. This was the first census and it was taken when Quirinius was governor of Syria. So JOSEPH put MARY, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a CHILD, on a DONKEY and went to the town of Bethlehem in Judea to register his family, because he came from the house of David. Bethlehem was crowded with visitors and

there was no place for the little family to stay, except in a cave where the COWS and DONKEYS were kept.

While the little family was in Bethlehem, the time came for MARY to deliver her CHILD and she gave birth to her firstborn and wrapped him with strips of cloth and laid him in a manger.

In that region there were SHEPHERDS living in the fields, keeping watch over their SHEEP by night. A STAR in the night sky became brighter and brighter. Then an ANGEL of the Lord stood by the SHEPHERDS and said to them, "Fear not, for I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people. For today, in the town of David, a Savior has been born who is Christ the Lord. And you will find the CHILD wrapped in cloth and lying in a manger." Suddenly, there was with the ANGEL, a multitude of ANGELS, praising God. And the ANGELS said, "Glory to God in heaven! And on earth, peace to those on whom God's favor rests." When the ANGELS left them, and returned to heaven, the SHEPHERDS said to one another, "Let's go straight to Bethlehem and see this event God has made known to us!"

In the night sky, the STAR shown down on the place of Jesus birth and the SHEPHERDS went to the place where the COWS and DONKEYS were kept and found MARY and JOSEPH with the CHILD lying in the manger. When they saw this, they shared the ANGELS' news about this CHILD. And all who heard it were amazed at what the SHEPHERDS told them. MARY treasured all these things and reflected on them in her heart. The SHEPHERDS went back to their SHEEP praising God for all they had heard and seen.

The Gospel of our Lord. **Thanks be to God!**

**Song**—"O Little Town of Bethlehem" (ELW #279)

O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie!  
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by;  
yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting light.  
The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.

For Christ is born of Mary, and, gathered all above while mortals  
sleep, the angels keep their watch of wond'ring love.  
O morning stars, together proclaim the holy birth,  
and praises sing to God the king, and peace to all the earth!

How silently, how silently the wondrous gift is giv'n!  
So God imparts to human hearts the blessings of his heav'n.  
No ear may hear his coming; but, in this world of sin,  
where meek souls will receive him, still the dear Christ enters in.

O holy child of Bethlehem, descend to us, we pray;  
cast out our sin, and enter in, be born in us today.  
We hear the Christmas angels the great glad tidings tell;  
oh, come to us, abide with us, our Lord Immanuel!

Text: Phillips Brooks, 1835-1893

**Young at Heart Message**

**Song**—"Away in a Manger" (ELW #277)

Away in a manger, no crib for his bed, the little Lord Jesus laid  
down his sweet head; the stars in the bright sky looked down  
where he lay, the little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.

The cattle are lowing; the baby awakes, but little Lord Jesus, no  
crying he makes. I love you, Lord Jesus; look down from the sky  
and stay by my cradle till morning is nigh.

Be near me, Lord Jesus; I ask you to stay close by me forever  
and love me, I pray. Bless all the dear children in your tender  
care and fit us for heaven, to live with you there.

Text: North American, 19th cent.

## Prayers of Intercession

Joining our voices with the song of the angels, let us pray for the church, the world, and all who are in need.

*A brief silence.*

The shepherds sing, "Jesus Christ is born!" Let your church throughout the world proclaim this good news, over the hills and everywhere. Unite the voices of all your faithful people in songs of praise and rejoicing. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Heaven and nature sing, "Joy to the world!" Give respite to flocks, fields, and those who tend them. Come near to us in the beauty of nighttime, the shining of the stars, and the hush of a world at rest. May our wonder at your creation rouse our care for all the earth. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

The angels sing, "Peace on earth!" Come quickly to still the strife of this world. Hush the noise of war and violence in places of unrest. Inspire leaders of nations to seek lasting peace and sustainable provision for all in their care. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Mary sings melodies of comfort to her newborn child. Bring rest and reassurance to those facing struggles this night. Shelter travelers and those without homes. Console those who lie awake due to pain or anxiety. Heal those who are sick or hurting. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

The heavenly chorus sings, "Glory to God in the highest!" We give you thanks for all the saints who have proclaimed your glory in word and deed. Let us join them this night in joyful praise around your eternal throne. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of mercy, come quickly to us with grace upon grace as we lift these and all our prayers to you, in the name of Jesus. **Amen.**

## Peace

## Lord's Prayer

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us.

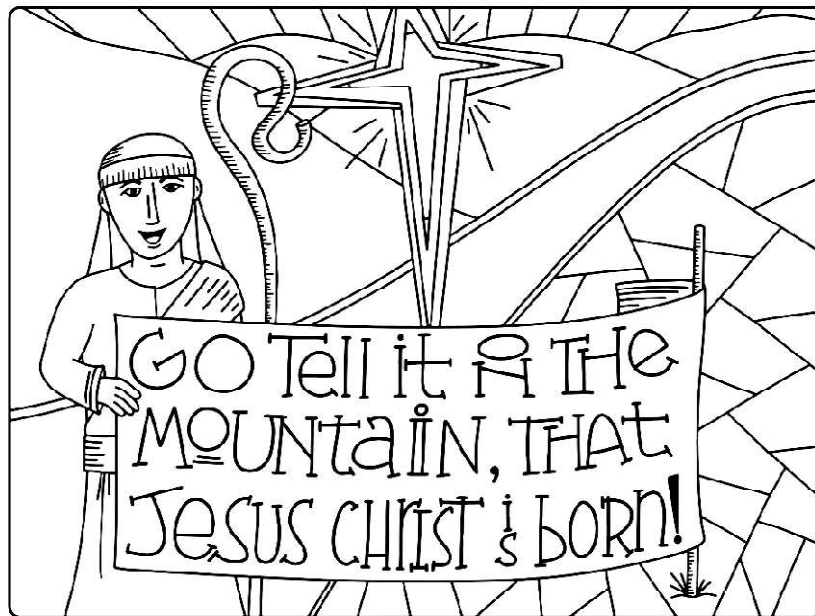
**Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name,  
thy kingdom come,  
thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.**

**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.**

## Blessing

Almighty God, who sent the Holy Spirit to Mary, proclaimed joy through the angels, sent the shepherds with good news, and led the magi by a star, bless you this day ☩ through the Word made flesh. **Amen.**



**Sending Song**—"Go Tell It on the Mountain" (ELW #290)

Go tell it on the mountain, over the hills and ev'rywhere;  
go tell it on the mountain that Jesus Christ is born!

While shepherds kept their watching o'er silent flocks by night,  
behold, throughout the heavens there shone a holy light.  
Go tell it on the mountain, over the hills and ev'rywhere;  
go tell it on the mountain that Jesus Christ is born!

The shepherds feared and trembled when, lo, above the earth  
rang out the angel chorus that hailed our Savior's birth.  
Go tell it on the mountain, over the hills and ev'rywhere;  
go tell it on the mountain that Jesus Christ is born!

Down in a lonely manger the humble Christ was born;  
and God sent us salvation that blessed Christmas morn.  
Go tell it on the mountain, over the hills and ev'rywhere;  
go tell it on the mountain that Jesus Christ is born!

Text: African American spiritual, refrain; John W. Work Jr., 1872-1925, stanzas, alt.

**Dismissal**

Glory to God in the highest! **Peace to God's people on earth!**  
Go in peace. Share the gift of Jesus. **Thanks be to God.**

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