

CHRIST+THE SAVIOR IS BORN



Houghton, Michigan Christmas Eve, 2025

Welcome to Worship

God's grace welcomes you, and so do we — the pastor and members of Peace! Jesus Christ is the only Savior of all people. By his perfect life, innocent death and triumphant resurrection, Jesus saves all sinners. We learn these truths from the Bible — God's complete plan for our salvation and his guidebook for our lives. Peace greets you with a warm welcome. We look forward to seeing you again soon!

About Our Service

The gospel (or good news) is not just information about what Jesus did to save sinners. It is also the power God uses to work faith in our hearts, transform our lives, and give us lasting peace. Therefore, Lutheran worship places the gospel in central focus in an order of service called the liturgy. In the message and meal (Holy Communion), in specially selected Scripture readings, and in carefully crafted songs, prayers, and creeds, the liturgy proclaims the good news about Jesus from start to finish. Lutheran worship is also designed to include the participation of the entire assembly (including children). For your ease and convenience, the order of service is printed out on the following pages. If a song is not found in this service folder, it can be found in the red or blue hymnals located on the chair in front of you.

A Connection Card

was given to you as you entered. Please fill out the card and leave it where you are sitting or place it in the offering plate. We would love to connect with those who are visiting us this evening.

Prayer Before Worship

Almighty God, you made this holy night shine with the brightness of the true Light. Grant that as we have known on earth the wonder of that Light, we may also behold him in all glory in the life to come; through your only Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Today's Focus: Christmas Eve - Heavenly Hosts Sing Alleluia

Families cherish their Christmas traditions. Year after year, they decorate the tree with the same ornaments, play the same music, bake the same Christmas cookies. Without asking, family members know when they will open presents. If you try to change your family's Christmas traditions, you might be in trouble! When it comes to family Christmases, people generally don't like things to change.

Because our celebration of Christmas has so many unchanging traditions, we might miss the fact that the birth of Christ the Savior meant radical change for the world. Would the change be an improvement or another step in decline? The angels answer the question. They don't sing "Watch out for impending doom!" They sing "glory" and "peace," praising God with alleluias!

Advent Wreath

The Advent wreath is a combination of two Christian symbols: light and the fir tree. From the early centuries of Christianity it has been the practice to represent Christ with a burning candle. In the meantime, the symbolic use of the fir tree, and consequently also the Advent wreath, originated hundreds of years ago among the Lutherans of Germany. Four candles adorn the wreath. These represent hope, peace, joy, and love, all of which are found in the Christ, who is represented with the white candle at the center. Week by week we light one more candle on the Advent wreath, the amount of light increasing as we approach the celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ, the Light of the world.

Service Participants:

Computer Organ: Mary Ann Krug Pastor of Peace: Pastor Welch



THE ORDER OF SERVICE FOR CHRISTMAS EVE

This order of service focuses the hearts and minds of worshipers on the many ancient prophecies foretelling Jesus's birth. We will go through a series of Biblical readings and popular Christmas carols to better understand and appreciate the promises that God has made and kept over the centuries.

The name of the triune God and the sign of the cross remind worshipers of their baptisms.

Invocation

In the name of the Father, and of the † Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Responses

For to us a child is born;

To us a Son is given!

Isaiah 9:6

Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you.

He is Christ the Lord!

Luke 2:11

Sing to the Lord a new song,

For he has done marvelous things!

Psalm 98:1

All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God! Psalm 98:3

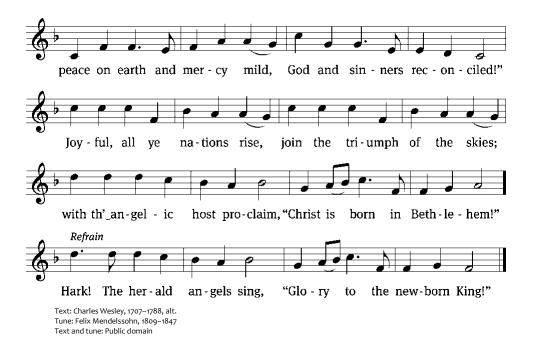
So we sing with the angels, "Glory to God in the highest!" Luke 2:14

Hymn

Hark! The Herald Angels Sing sts. 1, Ref



Hark! The her - ald an - gels sing, "Glo - ry to the new - born King;



Confession and Absolution

Lord, by right we should have nothing to sing about. Our hearts are full of love for you, yet we confess we have often loved others more than you. Our eyes behold your glory, but we confess we have also lusted for what you forbid. Our lips praise you, but we confess we have spoken evil again and again. Our sins have not brought the happiness they promised. Instead, they have brought trouble with one another and with you.

A moment of silence to reflect on our need for God's grace.

Merciful God, you tell us that your own dear Son took on human flesh to free us from the guilt of sin. You proclaim to us that his life and death cover our sins. Hear our prayer as we cry to you:

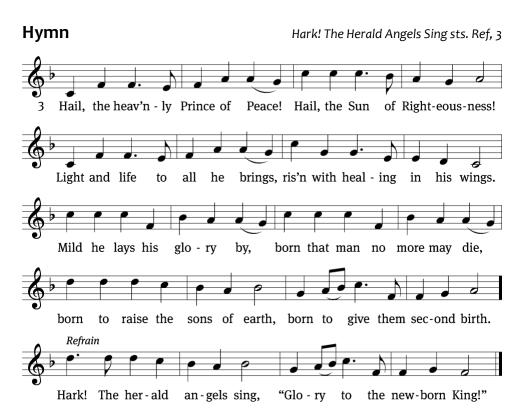
Forgive us, Father, for the sake of our Savior, Christ the Lord.

After his resurrection,
Jesus promised that when
Christians forgive each other's sins, their words are as valid and certain as his (John 20:22-23).

Glory to God in the highest!

In love that astounds us, eternal God sent his one and only Son to live among us without fault or failing, to obey as we could not, and to suffer what we deserved. In Christ there is indeed peace on earth. In Christ God extends his good will to all people. As his called servant and by his authority, I say to you what God says: In Christ your sins are forgiven!

Glory to God in the highest! Amen.





THE LESSONS AND CAROLS

Lesson Genesis 3:8–15

The Seed of the woman will crush the serpent's head.

⁸ They heard the voice of the LORD God, who was walking around in the garden during the cooler part of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.

⁹The LORD God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?"

¹⁰ The man said, "I heard your voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, so I hid myself."

"God said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree from which I commanded you not to eat?"

¹² The man said, "The woman you gave to be with me—she gave me fruit from the tree, and I ate it."

¹³ The LORD God said to the woman, "What have you done?"

The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

¹⁴The LORD God said to the serpent: Because you have done this, you are cursed more than all the livestock, and more than every wild animal.

You shall crawl on your belly,

and you shall eat dust all the days of your life.

¹⁵ I will put hostility between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed.

He will crush your head, and you will crush his heel.





Text: Latin, c. 12th cent., Psalteriolum Cantionum Catholicarum, Köln, 1710; tr. John Mason Neale, 1818–1866, alt. Tune: French, 15th cent., alt

Text and tune: Public domain

Lesson Genesis 22:15–18

God promises to faithful Abraham that in his seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.

¹⁵The Angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven ¹⁶ and said, "I have sworn by myself, declares the LORD, because you have done this thing and have not withheld your son, your only son, ¹⁷I will bless you greatly, and I will multiply your descendants greatly, like the stars of the sky and like the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the city gates of their enemies. ¹⁸In your seedall the nations of the earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice."



Lesson Micah 5:2-5

The prophet predicts the humble place where the great savior would be born.

² But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,

though you are small among the clans of Judah,

from you, will go out the one who will be the ruler for me in Israel.

His goings forth are from the beginning, from the days of eternity.

³Therefore the LORD will give them up,

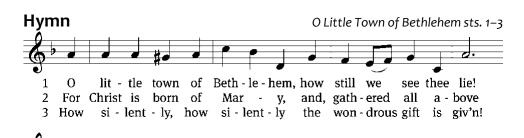
until the time when the woman who is in labor bears a child.

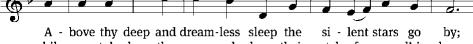
Then the remaining survivors from his brothers will return to the people of Israel.

⁴He will stand and shepherd with the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God.

They will dwell securely, for at that time he will be great to the ends of the earth.

⁵This one will be their peace.





A - bove thy deep and dream-less sleep the si - lent stars go by; while mor-tals sleep, the an - gels keep their watch of won-d'ring love. So God im-parts to hu - man hearts the bless-ings of his heav'n.



yet in thy dark streets shin - eth the ev - er - last - ing light. O morn-ing stars, to - geth - er pro - claim the ho - ly birth, No ear may hear his com - ing, but in this world of sin,



The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee to-night. and prais - es sing to God the King and peace to all the earth. where meek souls will re-ceive him, still the dear Christ en - ters in.

Lesson Isaiah 9:2-7

The prophet foretells the coming of the Savior.

² The people walking in darkness have seen a great light.

For those living in the land of the shadow of death, the light has dawned.

³You have multiplied the nation. You have increased its joy.

They rejoice before you like the joy at harvest time,

like the celebration when people divide the plunder.

⁴ For you have shattered the yoke that burdened them.

You have broken the bar on their shoulders and

the rod of their oppressor,

as you did in the day of Midian.

⁵ Every boot that marched in battle

and the garments rolled in blood will be burned.

They will be fuel for the fire.

⁶ For to us a child is born.

To us a son is given.

The authority to rule will rest on his shoulders.

He will be named:

Wonderful Counselor,

Mighty God,

Everlasting Father,

Prince of Peace.

⁷There will be no limit to his authority

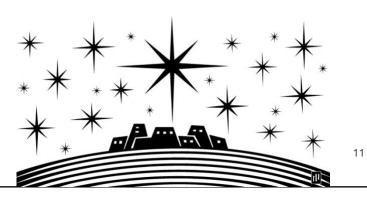
and no end to the peace he brings.

He will rule on David's throne and over his kingdom,

to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness

From now on, into eternity.

The zeal of the Lord of Armies will accomplish this.



Hymn Joy Has Dawned



1 Joy has dawned up - on the world,

Sounds of won-der fill the sky

Shep - herds bow be - fore the Lamb,
Son of Ad - am, Son of heav'n,

prom - ised from cre - a - tion—with the songs of an - gels gaz - ing at the glo - ry.
giv - en as a ran-som:



God's sal - va - tion now un-furled, as the might - y Prince of life Gifts of men from dis - tant lands rec - on - cil - ing God and man, hope for ev-'ry na-tion. shel-ters in a sta-ble. proph-e-sy the sto-ry: Christ, our might-y cham-pion!



Not with fan-fares from a - bove, not with scenes of glo - ry, Hands that set each star in place, shaped the earth in dark-ness, gold— a king is born to - day; in - cense—God is with us; What a Say - ior! What a friend! What a glo-rious mys - t'ry!



but a hum-ble gift of love— Je - sus born of Mar - y. cling now to a moth-er's breast, vul - n'ra-ble and help-less. myrrh—his death will make a way, and by his blood he'll win us. Once a babe in Beth-le - hem, now the Lord of his - t'ry.

Text: Stuart Townend, b. 1963; Keith Getty, b. 1974 Tune: Stuart Townend, b. 1963; Keith Getty, b. 1974

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Luke 1:26-38

The angel Gabriel announces to Mary the birth of a Son.

²⁶ In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee named Nazareth, ²⁷ to a virgin pledged in marriage to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸ The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you. Blessed are you among women.

²⁹ But she was greatly troubled by the statement and was wondering what kind of greeting this could be. ³⁰ The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, because you have found favor with God. ³¹ Listen, you will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to name him Jesus. ³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David. ³³ He will reign over the house of Jacob

forever, and his kingdom will never end."

³⁴ Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?"

³⁵ The angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. ³⁶ Listen, Elizabeth, your relative, has also conceived a son in her old age even though she was called barren, and this is her sixth month. ³⁷ For nothing will be impossible for God."

³⁸ Then Mary said, "See, I am the Lord's servant. May it happen to me as you have said." Then the angel left her.







Luke 2:1–20

St. Luke tells of the birth of Jesus.

¹In 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.) ³And everyone went to their own town to register.

⁴So 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. ⁵He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. ⁶While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, ⁷and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

⁸ There were in the same country shepherds staying out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock 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, "Do not be afraid. For behold, I bring you good news of great joy, which will be for all people: "Today in the town of David, a Savior was born for you. He is Christ the Lord. ¹² And this will be a sign for you: You will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." ¹³ Suddenly, there was with the angel a multitude from the heavenly army, praising God and saying, ¹⁴ "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward mankind."

¹⁵ When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Now let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." 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 told others the message they had been told about this child. ¹⁸ And all who heard it were amazed by what the shepherds said to them. ¹⁹ But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. ²⁰ And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

Hymn

Away in a Manger sts. 1, 3

The children will sing the first stanza, and the congregation will join to sing stanzas two and three.



Text (sts. 1-2): The Myrtle, Boston, 1884; (st. 3): Vineyard Songs, Louisville, 1892, alt. Tune: James R. Murray, 1841-1905

Lesson Matthew 2:1–12

The Magi are led by the star to Jesus.

'After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem 'and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him."

³When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. ⁴When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. ⁵"In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written:

6" 'But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel."

⁷Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. ⁸He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him."

⁹After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. ¹⁰When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. ¹¹On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. ¹²And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.



- with glad-ness men of 1 As old
- 2 with joy - ful steps they sped, Sav - ior, to thy low - ly bed, As
- As they of - fered gifts most rare at thy cra-dle, rude and bare,



as with joy they hailed its light, lead - ing on - ward, beam-ing bright, bend the knee be-fore thee, whom heav'n and earth a - dore, so may we with ho - ly joy, pure and free from sin's al - loy,



so, most gra-cious Lord, may ev - er - more be led by thee. we may we with will - ing ev - er seek thy mer - cy seat. feet so our cost-liest trea - sures bring, Christ, to thee, our heav'n-ly King.

Text: William C. Dix, 1837-1898, alt. Tune: Conrad Kocher, 1786-1872, alt. Text and tune: Public domain



Lesson John 1:1-14

St. John unfolds the great mystery of the incarnation.

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was with God in the beginning. ³ Through him everything was made, and without him not one thing was made that has been made. ⁴ In him was life, and the life was the light of mankind. ⁵ The light is shining in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

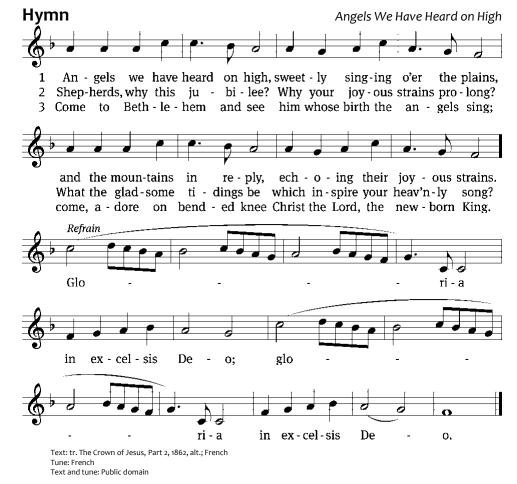
⁶There was a man, sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷He came as an eyewitness to testify about the light so that everyone would believe through him. ⁸He was not the light, but he came to testify about the light.



⁹ The real light that shines on everyone was coming into the world. ¹⁰ He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not recognize him. ¹¹ He came to what was his own, yet his own people did not accept him. ¹² But to all who did receive him, to those who believe in his name, he gave the right to become children of God. ¹³ They were born, not of blood, or of the desire of the flesh, or of a husband's will, but born of God.

⁴The Word became flesh and dwelled among us. We have seen his glory, the glory he has as the only-begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.





Prayer

Gracious Father, when the time had fully come, you sent your Son to carry out your plan to save the world from the tyranny of sin, the threat of death, and the power of Satan. On this holy night, strengthen our faith as we ponder the depth of your divine love.

Lead us to quiet awe as we remember your gracious compassion.

Impress on us the poverty and pain your Son endured in our place, how he willingly set aside his power and place and assumed the weakness of an infant and the starkness of a stable. Lead us to acknowledge the sins which compelled his humiliation and the love which accepted his lowliness.

Forgive us and move us to trust in his mission to save us.

Take away our fears and fright and fill us with joy as we hear the message that Jesus was born for us and that he came to restore peace with you and mend the bond broken by sin. Move us to sing our carols and hymns not with passing pleasure but with the depth of praise for his extraordinary love.

Let our songs and hymns reflect our faith in the redemption gained by Christ.

Lead us to kneel at his manger with hearts of faith and to see there the God-man who takes away the sins of the world. Guide and guard us so that the happiness shared with family and friends does not delay or discourage our journey to his holy crib.

Make the birth of Christ our highest priority and deepest pleasure.

Fill us with an eager joy that moves us to share the good news with others, especially those who may have forgotten or dismissed the love of God in Christ. Give us faith-filled maturity to recognize that the best gift we can give to children is the story of Jesus who was born as a baby and died on a cross to save them for heaven.

Move us to tell the good news we have seen and heard.

Hear us, Lord, as we pray in silence.

Silent prayer

During this hectic holiday, provide us with quiet times to remember what the birth of Jesus really means for us and all people, that he came to free us from the evil forces that separated us from your love, that he lived and died to forgive our sins, and that he rose in triumph to prepare a place where we will live with you forever.

Move us to sing with hearts of faith, "Glory to God in the highest!" Amen.

Lord's Prayer

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.

Offering

The members of Peace have joined together in the grace of giving (2 Corinthians 8:7) to do the Lord's work of sharing the message of Jesus. Visitors need not feel obligated. You are our guests!

Kindly fill out one of our Connection Cards. You may leave it on the pew, place it in the offering plate, or hand it to an usher.

Lighting of the Candles

After the offering has been collected, the congregation will light their candles. This is the procedure: The ushers will light the candles of those sitting nearest to the center aisle. Then, congregants will pass the flame down the pew until everyone's candle has a flame.

Please note: To avoid wax dripping on the carpet, chair, or clothing, the person who is receiving the flame will tilt their candle and not the person who is giving the flame. Thank you!



Text: tr. John F. Young, 1820–1885; Franz Joseph Mohr, 1792–1848 Tune: Franz Xaver Gruber, 1787–1863 Text and tune: Public domain

Once the song is over, you may extinguish your candle gently. Please take the candle with you when you exit and place it in the container near the entrance to the sanctuary. Thank you!



Announcements

WELCOME TO OUR GUESTS AND VISITORS! We are glad that you are here. We hope you can join us again soon!

THANK YOU! Thank you to those who have served in any number of ways: ushering, reaching out to others and inviting them, cleaning, encouraging, and praying. Your service to your Lord and to others honors the God who first served you through his Son, Jesus Christ.

FOUNDATIONS OF FAITH CLASS Foundations is for everyone: people interested in becoming members, those looking to build their faith, or the curious observer who wants to study the Bible without feeling obligated to join a church. This study is Bible-based and discussion-centered. Classes can be arranged to fit personal schedules.

To get plugged in or to request more information, contact Pastor Welch (pastor@peacehoughton.org). Childcare is available upon request.

CHRISTMAS DAY WORSHIP will begin tomorrow at 10:15 am.



ONLINE OFFERING OPTION If you would like to give an online offering today, please scan the QR code. All online donations are secure and go directly to Peace.

CHRISTMAS WISHES

May the Holy Spirit continually lead you to marvel at the manger and the cross, and to celebrate the Savior born to you so that he might die for you.

"He is Christ the Lord!"

From our family to yours,

Merry Christmas!

Pastor Welch

