



**Christ  
Lutheran**  
CHURCH

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CHRISTMAS EVE WORSHIP  
2023  
10:00 p.m.

## **We Welcome You to Christ Lutheran Church! We are a community of people sharing God’s love through Christ and growing together in faith.**

We celebrate all the ways we are made in the image of God, seeking to see God in everyone. We honor and respect each person’s age, ethnicity, family composition, gender identity, gender expression, life history, mental well-being, physical ability, relationship status, sexual orientation, skin color, and socioeconomic standing. Together, we strive to love and serve our neighbor and all creation, including working toward racial and social justice. We would love to walk with you on this creative adventure\* of faith, grace, and love.

*\* The first sermon ever preached at Christ Lutheran was titled “A Call to Creative Adventure.”*

### **ABOUT WORSHIP**

We gather to worship weekly to hear and remember our shared hope: the life, death, and resurrection of Christ makes all things new, even us.

You will find everything that happens in worship printed in this bulletin, with hymns found in the red hymnals (“ELW”) in the seats in front on you.

If you have a prayer request, note it on a yellow card from the seatback holder and pass it to an usher; the other side is for any information you would like about Christ Lutheran. Please feel welcome to remain seated as necessary during the service.

### **CHILDREN ARE ALWAYS WELCOME IN CHURCH!**

God’s people come in all shapes and sizes – it is a gift to the whole community when the smallest of us are present! Sitting with parents and learning to treasure times of worship is the foundation for helping build a growing faith in a child’s life. There’s some noise and movement that we expect from little ones - feel free to make use of the **activity bags, doodle pads, bookshelf in the overflow area and cry room at the back of the sanctuary** as needed. Whatever sacrifice of energy and effort you make to include your children in worship is multiplied as the good news of God’s love takes root in their lives!

### **RESTROOMS**

Men’s and women’s restrooms off the Gathering Area and Church Hall have changing tables, as does the all-gender restroom near the nursery. A second all-gender restroom is through the Vestry off the East hallway, past the Welcome Center.

### **HOLY COMMUNION**

**Holy Communion** is the family meal of God's people, to which we come at Jesus' invitation. The body and blood of Christ, in the bread and wine, are his real presence with us and offer the gift of forgiveness because of his death and resurrection. Drawn together and strengthened by this meal, we are given a taste of the fullness of God's coming kingdom, and are equipped to be the hands and feet of God's love in the world. All baptized Christians are always welcome at the Lord's table.

Our services are on video, and occasional photographs are taken for our website and e-mail news. If you have concerns, please speak to a church staff member.

*Hearing assistance devices are available to those who need help with listening to the service and are located at the entrance to the sanctuary, or please see an Usher for assistance.*

**A Reminder: Please turn off all cell phones during worship services.**

*In winter's deepest night, we welcome the light of the Christ child. Isaiah declares that the light of the long-promised king will illumine the world and bring endless peace and justice. The angels declare that Jesus' birth is good and joyful news for everyone, including lowly shepherds. Filled with the light that shines in our lives, we go forth to share the light of Christ with the whole world.*

## **GATHERING**

*The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God*

### **PRE-SERVICE MUSIC**

*Change Ring Prelude on 'Divinum Mysterium'  
Good Christian Friends, Rejoice  
Three Songs for the Christ Child*

Gramann  
arr. Larson  
Smith

## **WELCOME**

### **CALL TO WORSHIP**

Tonight we gather.

**It is time to worship!**

We listen for God.

**It is time to hear!**

We receive God's grace.

**It is time to be loved!**

We leave in peace.

**It is time to serve others!**

We celebrate Jesus' arrival —

Emmanuel, God-with-us,  
who is here in this time and place.

### **PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

People of God, when we think that we have nowhere left to turn,  
we can always turn to God.

Whether we feel frozen or are rushing with no time to rest,  
whether it feels like life is happening to us too quickly  
or like our lives will never change,

God is with us.

For God, there is always time for forgiveness.

We trust God, and we confess our sins together.

*Time for reflection.*

Holy One,  
**We have not stayed awake.**  
**We have missed you when you appeared**  
**in our neighbors,**  
**in strangers half a world away,**  
**in the suffering planet.**  
**We have wasted the time and the skills that you gave us**  
**and assumed we were powerless to mend**  
**the breaches in our world.**  
**Sometimes, we even gave up**  
**on your mercy, justice, and love.**  
**God, is it too late for us?**  
**Speak tenderly to our anxious hearts.**  
**Tear open the heavens and heal what we have done. Amen.**

People of God,  
God's judgment is certain  
and God's forgiveness is lightning fast.  
Hear this good news:  
in the name of † Jesus Christ, all your sins are forgiven.  
Forgiveness gives us the courage we need.  
Wherever we wait for God's time to come,  
we will witness wonders.  
**Amen.**

GATHERING CAROL: ELW #269

*Once in Royal David's City*



1 Once in roy - al Da - vid's cit - y stood a low - ly cat - tle shed,  
 2 He came down to earth from heav-en who is God and Lord of all,  
 3 And our eyes at last shall see him, through his own re - deem - ing love;  
 4 Not in that poor low - ly sta - ble, with the ox - en stand - ing by,



where a moth - er laid her ba - by in a man - ger for his bed;  
 and his shel - ter was a sta - ble, and his cra - dle was a stall;  
 for that child so dear and gen - tle is our Lord in heav'n a - bove;  
 we shall see him; but in heav - en, set at God's right hand on high;



Mar - y was that moth - er mild, Je - sus Christ, her lit - tle child.  
 with the poor and meek and low - ly, lived on earth our Sav - ior ho - ly.  
 and he leads his chil - dren on to the place where he is gone.  
 there his chil - dren gath - er round, bright like stars, with glo - ry crowned.



## **GREETING**

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.**

*Children: This is the day that the Lord has made.*

**Let us rejoice and be glad in it.**

*The assembly is seated.*

## **LIGHTING THE ADVENT WREATH**

*“And [Mary] gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no place in the guest room.” (Luke 2:7)*

Emmanuel, God-with-us,  
the time is now. You are here!  
We light every candle on our wreath  
because your presence glows among us.  
However this night finds us—  
filled with joy or touched by grief,  
alone or in the company of our loved ones—  
you are with us, and you will never leave.  
And so we sing with the angels:  
**Alleluia and Amen!**

## **WORD**

*God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching and song*

## **CHILDREN’S TIME**

*Children are invited forward for a time together.*

### **READING: Isaiah 9:2-7a**

<sup>2</sup> 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. <sup>3</sup> You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as people exult when dividing plunder. <sup>4</sup> For the yoke of their burden, and the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian. <sup>5</sup> For all the boots of the tramping warriors and all the garments rolled in blood shall be burned as fuel for the fire. <sup>6</sup> 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. <sup>7</sup>His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom.

**We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.**

**CAROL: ELW #264**

*Prepare the Royal Highway*



1 Pre - pare the roy - al high - way; the King of kings is near!  
2 God's peo - ple, see him com - ing: your own e - ter - nal king!  
3 Then fling the gates wide o - pen to greet your prom - ised king!  
4 His is no earth - ly king - dom; it comes from heav'n a - bove.



Let ev - 'ry hill and val - ley a lev - el road ap - pear!  
Palm branch - es strew be - fore him! Spread gar - ments! Shout and sing!  
Your king, yet ev - 'ry na - tion its trib - ute too may bring.  
His rule is peace and free - dom and jus - tice, truth, and love.



Then greet the King of glo - ry, fore - told in sa - cred sto - ry:  
God's prom - ise will not fail you! No more shall doubt as - sail you!  
All lands will bow be - fore him; their voic - es join your sing - ing:  
So let your praise be sound - ing for kind - ness so a - bound - ing:

*Refrain*



Ho - san - na to the Lord, for he ful - fills God's word!

## **READING: Luke 2:1-18**

<sup>1</sup>In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. <sup>2</sup>This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. <sup>3</sup>All went to their own towns to be registered. <sup>4</sup>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. <sup>5</sup>He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. <sup>6</sup>While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. <sup>7</sup>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.

**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God,  
eternally begotten of the Father.**

<sup>8</sup>In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. <sup>9</sup>Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. <sup>10</sup>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: <sup>11</sup>to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. <sup>12</sup>This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger."

**God from God, Light from Light,  
true God from true God, begotten, not made,  
of one Being with the Father; through him all things were made.**

<sup>13</sup>And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,

<sup>14</sup>"Glory to God in the highest heaven,  
and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"

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



**CAROL: ELW #270**

*Hark! The Herald Angels Sing*



1 Hark! The her - ald an - gels sing, "Glo - ry to the new - born king;  
2 Christ, by high - est heav'n a - dored, Christ, the ev - er - last - ing Lord,  
3 Hail the heav'n - born Prince of peace! Hail the Sun of righ - teous - ness!



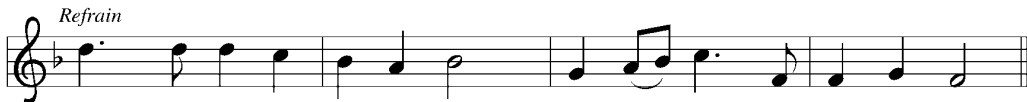
peace on earth, and mer - cy mild, God and sin - ners rec - on - ciled."  
late in time be - hold him come, off - spring of a vir - gin's womb.  
Light and life to all he brings, ris'n with heal - ing in his wings.



Joy - ful, all you na - tions, rise; join the tri - umph of the skies;  
Veiled in flesh the God - head see! Hail, in - car - nate de - i - ty!  
Mild he lays his glo - ry by, born that we no more may die,



with an - gel - ic hosts pro - claim, "Christ is born in Beth - le - hem!"  
Pleased as man with us to dwell, Je - sus, our Em - man - u - el!  
born to raise each child of earth, born to give us sec - ond birth.



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

**CHRISTMAS MESSAGE**

*Time for reflection follows the sermon.*

## CAROL: ELW #279

*O Little Town of Bethlehem*

O lit - tle town of Beth - le - hem, how still we see thee lie!  
 For Christ is born of Mar - y, and, gath - ered all a - bove  
 How si - lent - ly, how si - lent - ly the won - drous gift is giv'n!  
 O ho - ly child of Beth - le - hem, de - scend to us, we pray;



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.  
 cast out our sin, and en - ter in, be born in us to - day.



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,  
 We hear the Christ - mas an - gels the great glad tid - ings tell;



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.  
 oh, come to us, a - bide with us, our Lord Im - man - u - el!

## PRAYERS

*The assembly stands with the presiding minister.*

As we wait for the one who is Good News, we pray for the world, for the Church, and for all people.

**For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven.**

We pray for your Church, O God, that we might see we are united as your Body, that together we may tell the good news of your mercy on all the mountains.

**He was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary and became truly human.**

We pray for your world, O God, for all who suffer violence and abuse, for all who suffer for conscience's sake, for the end of hatred and humiliation, war and famine, drought and disease.

**For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate.**

We pray for those in need, O God, for those who are in prison, for those who are ill, for those who hunger and thirst, for those struggling with depression, for all who suffer. We pray for those who care for others in your name, for nurses and physicians, aides and technicians, custodians and cooks.

**He suffered death and was buried.**

We pray for sisters and brothers who are dying, O God, for hospice workers and chaplains, for funeral directors and cemetery workers, for all who grieve in this winter season.

**On the third day he rose again in accordance with the scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.**

We pray in thanksgiving for the saints gathered around your throne, O God, who have shone your glory by sharing your light.

**He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.**

O God, Creator of the universe and hope of all ages, your mercy is the sign we long for. We commend into your outstretched arms all for whom we pray, trusting in Jesus Christ, our savior and our hope.

**Amen.**

## SHARING OF THE PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you always.

**And also with you.**

*We invite those worshiping by livestream to share a sign of peace in the chat, and for those in person we turn to offer them our greeting of peace before sharing a sign of peace with one another: **Peace be with you!***

## MEAL

*God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ*

### **OFFERING**

*This congregation serves our neighbors, community, and the world through the participation and support of its members and guests. Because offerings are never just about us, this month we are sharing a portion of your gifts with **Bethel Lutheran Church**, a diverse, urban ELCA congregation in the Miller neighborhood of Gary, Indiana (part of NW Indiana Conference of I-K Synod) <http://bethelmiller.org> and <http://facebook.com/bethelmillerbeach>.*



*If you wish to give electronically, use the QR code or browse to our secure on-line portal at [clevalpo.org/give](http://clevalpo.org/give) or use [our CLC app](#) (download at [clevalpo.org/app](http://clevalpo.org/app)).*

### **OFFERTORY**

*Noel: Une Vierge Pucelle*

Le Bègue

### **OFFERING PRAYER**

*The assembly stands as the gifts are brought forward.*

Loving God,

For the time we have, we say:

**Thank you.**

For the gifts we offer, we say:

**Thank you.**

For the chance to help others, we say:

**Thank you.**

For the people whose lives will be better because of these gifts, we say:

**Thank you.**

For the ways you are changing the world, we say:

**Thank you.**

We pray in the name of Jesus, who appears wherever people need our help.

**Amen.**

### **GREAT THANKSGIVING**

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts.

**We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

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

## **TABLE PRAYER**

Holy God, Creator of all and Source of life, at the birth of time your word brought light into the world.

**We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,**

You spoke your word of power and created all things, and without you not one thing was made.

**who proceeds from the Father and the Son,**

You spoke your word of promise to Abraham and Sarah, Moses and Miriam, and created a people bound to you.

**who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified,**

You spoke your word of longing through prophets and priests, outcast and unclean, calling your people to return to you.

**who has spoken through the prophets.**

In the fullness of time, you sent your Word, born of Mary, to shine in our darkness and to make us your beloved children.

**We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church.**

On that day angels and shepherds sang for joy as your Word became flesh, coming among us as a defenseless baby. As his arms were tied in swaddling clothes, so later his hands were nailed to the cross, yet you made his birth and death the gateway to resurrection life.

**We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.**

In the night in which he was betrayed,  
our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks;  
broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:  
Take and eat; this is my body, given for you.

Do this for the remembrance of me.

**Amen.**

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks,  
and gave it for all to drink, saying:  
This cup is the new covenant in my blood,  
shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin.

Do this for the remembrance of me.

**Amen.**

Remembering his word of hope given for us, we proclaim the mystery of faith:

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

By your Spirit bless us and this bread and cup,  
that, held and nourished by you,  
we may live as your children,  
shining with the light of your Son.

**We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come.**

Through him all glory and honor is yours,  
Almighty Father, with the Holy Spirit,  
in your holy Church,  
both now and forever.

**Amen and Amen!**

### **LORD'S PRAYER**

*Children: The Spirit makes us one, we 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.**

### **INVITATION TO COMMUNION**

The time is now! Taste and see God's goodness.

**Thanks be to God.**

### **DISTRIBUTION**

*The assembly is seated.*

*The pastor invites those worshipping via **livestream** to commune:*

The body of Christ, given for you.

**Amen (receive the bread)**

The blood of Christ, shed for you.

**Amen (receive the cup)**

**In-person distribution:** When indicated by the ushers, come up the right-hand ramp to approach the altar rail. When finished you may leave individually without being dismissed. **WINE** is lighter-colored and **GRAPE JUICE** is dark; they are received via individual cups in the trays. **USED GLASSES** are placed in the basket located near the ramp. **GLUTEN-FREE BREAD IS AVAILABLE**, please indicate to the server that you require this.

## COMMUNION CAROLS

### ELW #296 *What Child is This?*



- 1 What child is this, who, laid to rest, on Mar - y's lap is sleep - ing?
- 2 Why lies he in such mean es - tate where ox and ass are feed - ing?
- 3 So bring him in - cense, gold, and myrrh; come, peas - ant, king, to own him.



Whom an - gels greet with an-thems sweet while shep-herds watch are keep - ing?  
Good Chris-tian, fear; for sin-ners here the si - lent Word is plead - ing.  
The King of kings sal - va - tion brings; let lov - ing hearts en-throne him.



This, this is Christ the king, whom shep-herds guard and an - gels sing;  
Nails, spear shall pierce him through, the cross be borne for me, for you;  
Raise, raise the song on high, the vir - gin sings her lul - la - by;



haste, haste to bring him laud, the babe, the son of Mar - y!  
hail, hail the Word made flesh, the babe, the son of Mar - y!  
joy, joy, for Christ is born, the babe, the son of Mar - y!

ELW #272 *Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming*

1 Lo, how a rose e'er bloom - ing from ten - der stem hath  
 2 I - sai - ah had fore - told it, the rose I have in  
 3 This flow'r, whose fra - grance ten - der with sweet - ness fills the  
 4 O Sav - ior, child of Mar - y, who felt our hu - man

sprung! Of Jes - se's lin - eage com - ing as  
 mind; with Mar - y we be - hold it, the  
 air, dis - pels with glo - rious splen - dor the  
 woe; O Sav - ior, king of glo - ry, who

seers of old have sung, it came, a flow'r so bright, a -  
 vir - gin moth - er kind. To show God's love a - right, she  
 dark - ness ev - 'ry - where. True man, yet ver - y God, from  
 dost our weak - ness know: bring us at length, we pray, to

mid the cold of win - ter, when half - spent was the night.  
 bore to us a Sav - ior, when half - spent was the night.  
 sin and death he saves us and light - ens ev - 'ry load.  
 the bright courts of heav - en and in - to end - less day.



*After all have returned to their places, the assembly stands as the minister continues.*  
The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in his grace.  
**Amen.**

### **PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

We thank you, wondrous God, for Jesus,  
God with us, in these gifts of bread and wine.  
As we have shared this feast of love,  
strengthen us to share your love with all the world.  
In Jesus' name we pray.  
**Amen.**

### **SENDING**

*God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world*

### **CANDLE LIGHTING**

*As the light is shared, remember: the lit candle is never tilted. The unlit candle is lifted up for lighting.*

### **READING: JOHN 1:1-14**

### **CAROL:           *Silent Night***

*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.*

*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!'*

*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.*

**READING: Luke 2:19-20**

<sup>19</sup>But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. <sup>20</sup>The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

**DIALOG AND BENEDICTION**

Loving God,

For the time we have, we say:

**Thank you.**

For the times we are given to live in, we say:

**Thank you.**

For Jesus, your mercy born into our time, we say:

**Thank you.**

For your timeless love, we say:

**Thank you.**

May you be filled with the wonder of Mary, the obedience of Joseph, the joy of the angels, the eagerness of the shepherds, the determination of the magi, and the light and hope of the Christ child. Almighty God, Father, Son + and Holy Spirit bless you now and forever.

**Amen.**

**DISMISSAL**

*Children: Go in peace. Christ is with you.*

**Thanks be to God!**

*Please extinguish candles with care; place them in the baskets on the way out of the sanctuary.*

**POSTLUDE**

*Of the Father's Love Begotten*

Held

**A BLESSED CHRISTMAS TO ALL!!**

## **Worship Leaders**

Acolyte:	Shawn Longacre
Lector:	Dave Keammerer
Prayer Assistant:	Phil McGuire
Communion Assistants:	Cindy McGuire
Ushers:	
Light and Sound Technician:	Tony Reinhold
Livestream Technician:	Ben Crill
Pastors:	Rev. Timothy Knauff, Jr. Rev. Erica Gibson-Even
Director of Music Ministries:	Brian Bartusch
Worship Participants:	Celebration Ringers Handbell Choir Daniel Gibson-Even, piano



THANKS to all who have given the beautiful poinsettias to the  
Glory of our Lord on this Christmas Eve:

Bocek Family ~ In Memory of Mary Sikorski

Jacquie Chevalier ~ In Honor of my children: Libby, Veronica and Codey

Gregg & Vickie Copeland ~ In Celebration of our family

Michael and Lois Felten ~ In Honor of Connie Bretscher and in Memory of our family

Phil Hahn ~ In Honor of my daughters: Theresa, Heather & Carolyn  
and In Memory of my wife, Laurel

Darla Hernandez ~ In Honor of the Hernandez Family and  
In Memory of David Hernandez

Margaret Johnson ~ In Memory of Don Johnson & Mindy Barnett

Sara Long ~ In Memory of Dean Long

Marilyn McGawn ~ In Memory of Malcolm

Jeff & Lisa Owen ~ In Memory of Marjorie Owen

Kathy Page ~ In Memory of my husband, Tom Page

Dot Ruuska ~ In Memory of Whitey

Grace and Jeff Safrin ~ In Memory of Janina and Jozef Laskowiecki

Cheryl Slack ~ In Memory of my friend, Mary Sikorski

Kathy & Kurt Stefans

Ellen Swayne ~ In Honor of my family and In Memory of Gladys & Charles Swayne

Sherry Taraskiewicz ~ In Memory of my husband, Larry Taraskiewicz

Jerrie and Stu Walesh ~ In Memory of our Parents



# A Christmas Prayer

God, a Christmas Eve confession:  
I'm stuck in prep mode.  
There are meals to organize,  
and gifts to wrap,  
and miles to travel,  
and, and, and . . .  
I lose touch  
with what I'm getting ready *for*.

When the moment arrives,  
will I miss it?

God, please don't let me.

Lift my head up from the flocks I've been tending  
so I hear the angels sing.  
Draw my gaze down from the star I've been tracking  
so I see the stable.  
Drag me away from the food prep  
and into the feast.  
Why am I so worried about wrapping paper  
when the most important gift is you?

Carry me from  
*almost ready,*  
*one minute more,*  
*this is the last thing, I promise!*  
and into the everlasting instant  
when there is no more time:  
because the world has grown quiet,  
because the busyness is hushed,  
because there is nothing more to  
accomplish except  
to marvel,  
because you have arrived,  
because you are with us,  
Emmanuel.  
Amen.

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