



On this winter evening, we gather to proclaim the coming of the light. Isaiah announces that the people who walked in darkness have seen a great light. In the familiar account of Christ's birth, the evening sky is bright with the heavenly host singing, "Glory to God in the highest." Amid our broken world we proclaim that the prince of peace is born among us. God comes to us in human flesh — so that we may be bearers of divine light to all the world.

We celebrate the birth of Christ.

Prayer of the Day

Almighty God, you made this holy night shine with the brightness of the true Light. Grant that here on earth we may walk in the light of 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.

The Holy Gospel: Luke 2:1-20

The Holy Gospel according to Luke.

Glory to you O Lord.

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

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 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: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.” And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!” 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.” So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

The Gospel of the Lord

Praise to you O Christ.

Homily

I greet you in the name of Jesus: the Babe of Bethlehem! Amen.

Its Christmas time and we have a flare for the extraordinary. Let's face it; the holiday season does come with extraordinary expectations.

Expectations like:

- gifts are perfectly wrapped – with large beautiful bows,
- outdoor decorations are spectacular – flood lights, lights that blink not to mention the blow-up characters for the front lawns,
- travel goes smoothly and everyone makes it home for the holiday,
- all Christmas cards are of the Hallmark Greeting variety – ones which display a faultless, perfect version of life.

Expectations that

- families reunite and relationships are mended,
- grievances are set aside and peace reigns at the dinner table – for just once,
- the daily challenges of life are left behind, if just for one night.

Well, here we are on Christmas Eve and how are you doing with your expectations? The probable reality is that some of our extraordinary expectations may have not been met.

- Some of us may not have been able to purchase all of the gifts we would have liked
- some of us may have already stained our special Christmas tie with shrimp sauce
- someone is not going to be home for Christmas except only in our dreams
- someone this evening will mention something a little too political at the dinner table
- and someone either this evening or tomorrow will forget to bring their famous dish of brussels sprouts out of the oven – only find it when they are getting ready to do the dishes.

I'm here to tell you something you may already know: It's ok...It is ok.

It's ok if your Christmas has not lived up to the extraordinary expectations of such a night.

It's ok because the Christmas story, too, is one that doesn't really live up to extraordinary expectations. It's tense, messy, and flies under the radar. The Christmas story is really not all that extraordinary. In fact, as far as first century births go, it really is quite ordinary.

Mary and Joseph are not exempt from the political systems of their time— they must go to be registered, to participate in the census, just like everyone else. Despite Mary's late pregnancy, there are no bending of the rules for this ordinary couple, and so, they must go. When it becomes time for Mary and Joseph to rest from their travels, they do not get special treatment. The hotels are all booked. The sign in the window reads in bright red, "No Vacancy." So, like weary travelers who must curl up and sleep on airport floors or on bus terminal benches, they rest among the animals and straw.

Mary and Joseph remain in their makeshift resting place and wait for Mary to give birth. Jesus is not born into royalty but to a poor, teenage mother.

There is no Buckingham Palace, there is no gold gilded bed—their newborn, Jesus, is placed in a rough-hewn manger. He is wrapped not in velvet purple robes but as we are told in ordinary bands of cloth. Baby Jesus and his parents are not visited by religious elite but by shepherds, the strange outcasts who were not even worth counting in the census. In this one event, God comes in the most ordinary of ways: a mother, a father, and their newborn child.

The birth of the Son of God does not meet extraordinary expectations. It is not how first century Israelites expected a messiah to arrive and it is still not what we might imagine the coming of the divine to look like. In this story, God is not revealed in arrogant wisdom, philosophies, principles, or values. Instead, God sneaks into our world under the radar, past our expectations of what a God should be, in the form of a human child. The Christmas story is a story of how God comes into a world that looks a little too much like our own story.

The birth of Jesus blesses the ordinary, it ordains the messiness, it embraces humanness. God comes to earth to greet our ordinary, everyday lives. God meets us in our mundane, in our letdowns, in our less than spectacular selves. In the birth of Jesus, God is no longer distant and a part from us but intimate and close. God comes to us in human skin, human doubt, human joy, human pain, human life, and the world is changed forever. The world is changed forever because God can do extraordinary things with the ordinary.

So, if you are feeling a little too ordinary tonight— a little too disheveled, a little too tired, too messy, too broken... it's ok. You see, God embraces us just as we are. God loves us just the way we are.

My friends in Christ. Through deep love, God has come to us in the Christ child – Emmanuel – God with us.

On this Holies of Holiest nights, let us sing carols and proclaim with the angels that Good News has indeed come and that light will always shine into the darkness. Let us gather around this table for a family meal of bread and wine and remind each other of God's nourishing presence. Let us go and tell it on the mountain that all are worthy of God's love, because this night God in Christ has come near. Christ has come near to our messy, ordinary selves and we have been claimed as God's beloved children.

Merry Christmas!

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.

Benediction

The Lord bless you and keep you,
The Lord's face shine upon you and be gracious unto you,
The Lord look upon you with favour and give you (+) peace. Amen.

Prayers used by permission by Augsburg Fortress – Sundays and Seasons

STTLC Communiqué

In Our Prayers Today.....Mike Harrington, Lila Martinat, Irlavere Tubbe, Bobby Keuhl, Adele Krieger, Tracy Schori and Christa Reitlingshoefer.

The 2026 Offering Envelopes are available at the back of the church. If you can deliver any, please do so. Thank you.

Last day for donations for 2025 – in order that we can deposit funds to the bank in time to include the donation on this year's charitable receipt for tax purposes, we ask that you have the donation to us by **Sunday, December 28, 2025**.

The Poinsettia Plants have been placed to the glory of God for the gift of the Christ Child by the following people:

Barbara and John Beimers	Nancy Briscoe
Marie and Clayton Lenser	Cathy and Lawrence Lupton
Rowena and Tom May	Cheryl and Blaine McEwen
Beverly and Orval Petznick	Oscar Reinert and Family
Laurel Schilling	Frank and Cheryl Schilling and Family
Russel Schroeder and Family	Joanna Spencer
Dennis Stalbie	Eva and Wolfgang Stockmann
Joan and Neil Stroud	Marlene and Garry Rutz
Donna and Casey Wierzbicki	Ron Zadow and Family
Pastor Bruce and Charlotte Thompson and Family	

The Christmas Tree has been given to the glory of God by Pauline and Billy Roesler.

The Outdoor Christmas Planters have been given to the glory of God by Lindsay, Brad and Anna Rowe.

The Scandinavian Candles were hand crafted and given to the glory of God by Joan and Neil Stroud.

