

St. Paul Lutheran Church of Stillwater, Minnesota

December 24, 2025

Nativity of our Lord



Your presence at worship is important to God and to us! Whether you are a first-time visitor, frequent participant, neighbor, member, or friend, please take a moment as you prepare for worship to share some information on the "Welcome to Worship" card included with your bulletin. Place it in the offering plate at the time the offering is received.

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. Paul reminds us that the grace of God through Jesus Christ brings salvation to all people. 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 word and light of Christ with the whole world.

Many of our worship materials are taken from the red Evangelical Lutheran Worship (ELW). Page numbers are located in the front half of the book, and hymn numbers are located in the back half of the book.

The assembly **speaks** or **sings** the bold responses.



GATHERING

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

Prelude "Hark the Herald Angels Sing" Handbell Choir

Gospel Proclamation Pew Bible: New Testament Page 58
Luke 2:1-14

The gospel is introduced:

The holy gospel according to Luke.

Glory to you, O Lord.

At the conclusion:

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Gathering Song ELW Hymn 283
"O Come, All Ye Faithful"

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.

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.

Anthem "God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen" Chancel Choir

WORD

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

First Reading

Pew Bible: Old Testament Page 638

Isaiah 9:2-7

This poem promises deliverance from Assyrian oppression, a hope based on the birth of a child from an unknown woman. While his name is full of promise, the real basis for faith lies in God's passion for the people: The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this!

At the conclusion:

Word of God, word of life.

Thanks be to God.

Psalm 98 (paraphrase)

ELW Hymn 267

An extended introduction by the Handbell Choir.

Verses 1 and 4.

"Joy to the World"

Second Reading

Pew Bible: New Testament Page 215

Titus 2:11-14

The appearance of God's grace in Jesus Christ brings salvation for all humanity. Consequently, in the present we live wisely and justly while also anticipating the hope of our Savior's final appearance.

At the conclusion:

Word of God, word of life.

Thanks be to God.

Children's and Outreach Message

Jenny Brelje

Gospel Acclamation

ELW Hymn 274

"On Christmas Night"

Gospel Reading

Pew Bible: New Testament Pages 91-92

John 1:1-14

The prologue to the Gospel of John describes Jesus as the Word of God made flesh, the one who reveals God to be “full of grace and truth.”

The gospel is introduced:

The holy gospel according to John.

Glory to you, O Lord.

At the conclusion:

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Sermon

Pastor Nathan Baker-Trinity

Silence for reflection follows the sermon.

Hymn of the Day

ELW Hymn 270

"Hark! The Herald Angels Sing"

Prayers of Intercession

After each prayer:

God of grace,

hear our prayer.

At the conclusion:

With the joy of Christ’s birth in our hearts, we commend our prayers to you, O God, trusting in your boundless mercy and eternal love; through Jesus Christ our Savior.

Amen.

Peace

The peace of Christ be with you always.

And also with you.

All are invited to greet one another with a sign of Christ’s peace.

MEAL

God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ.

Offering

3:00 PM *"Infant Holy, Infant Lowly"*

Chancel Choir

5:00 PM *"In the Bleak Midwinter"*

Kyle Burbey

John Baumgartner

Our offering is a collection of money for the church's mission, including the care of those in need, as a sign of the giving of our whole selves in grateful response for all God's gifts. Your offering and "Welcome to Worship" card may be placed in the offering plate. The QR code on the right may be used if you wish to give electronically.



Offering Prayer

Good and loving God, we rejoice in the birth of Jesus, who came among the poor to bring the riches of your grace. As you have blessed us with your gifts, let them be blessing for others. With the trees of the field, with all earth and heaven, we shout for joy at the coming of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

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.

Holy God, you alone are holy, you alone are God.

The universe declares your praise:

beyond the stars; beneath the sea;

within each cell; with every breath.

We praise you, O God.

Generations bless your faithfulness:
through the water; by night and day;
across the wilderness; out of exile; into the future.

We bless you, O God.

We give you thanks for your dear Son:
at the heart of human life; near to those who suffer;
beside the sinner; among the poor; with us now.

We thank you, O God.

In the night in which he was betrayed . . .

Again, after supper, he took the cup . . .

Remembering his love for us
on the way, at the table, and to the end,
we proclaim the mystery of faith:

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

We pray for the gift of your Spirit:
in our gathering; within this meal;
among your people; throughout the world.

Blessing, praise, and thanks to you, holy God,
through Christ Jesus, by your Spirit,
in your church, without end.

Amen.



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.**

Communion

We celebrate at an open communion table. All who hear our Lord's invitation are welcome to participate. Receive the bread first with an open hand and eat immediately, followed by the juice (white) or wine (red). Gluten-free bread is available at the front end of the center aisle. Please indicate to an usher if you need to receive communion from your pew. Children who have received age-appropriate instruction are welcome to commune. If you prefer instead to receive a blessing, please indicate by crossing your arms over your shoulders.

*When giving the bread and cup, the communion ministers say:
The body of Christ, given for you.
The blood of Christ, shed for you.
and each person may respond:
Amen.*

Communion Hymns

“Away in a Manger”	ELW Hymn 277
“What Child is This?”	ELW Hymn 296
“The First Noel”	ELW Hymn 300

Prayer After Communion

Radiant God, with our eyes we have seen your salvation, and in this meal we have feasted on your grace. May your Word take flesh in us, that we may be your holy people, revealing your glory made known to us in Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

Candle Lighting	ELW Hymn 281
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At this time, you are invited to switch on your handheld candles.

3:00 PM	“O Holy Night”	Mark Zempel, soloist
5:00 PM	“Mary, Did You Know?”	Maggie Koebel Riley MacDonald Kim Alswager Karen Hillmann

Nativity Hymn	ELW Hymn 281
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All are invited to sing the German stanza first, followed by the three stanzas in English.

“Silent Night, Holy Night”



SENDING

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

Blessing

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord's face shine on you with grace and mercy.

The Lord look upon you with favor and [☩] give you peace.

Amen.

Sending Song

ELW Hymn 289

"Angels We Have Heard on High"

Dismissal

Go in peace. Serve the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Postlude

"Christmas Joy!"

Thank You!

St. Paul Lutheran extends heartfelt gratitude to the members
of our Chancel Choir and Handbell Choir.

We also offer a special thank you to the talented musicians and
vocalists who made our worship services truly memorable today.

Trumpet - Kyle Burbey

Trumpet - Riley MacDonald

Trombone - John Baumgartner

Vocalists – Mark Zempel, Maggie Koebele, Riley MacDonald,
Kim Alswager, and Karen Hillmann

DAILY PRAYER
For Protection through the Night
based upon a prayer of Saint Augustine

Keep watch, dear Lord, with those who work or watch or weep this night, and give your angels charge over those who sleep. Tend the sick, give rest to the weary, bless the dying, soothe the suffering, comfort the afflicted, shield the joyous; and all for your love's sake. Amen.

CONNECTIONS WITH THE LITURGY
Precious Light

The prayer of the day, based on a seventh-century prayer in a collection known as the Gelasian Sacramentary, has long been appointed for Christmas Eve. Most Christians in history have prayed this prayer by meager candlelight, a precious gift before electricity. Our worship this night prays for Christ's light throughout the world and at the end of time.

CATECHISM CONNECTION
Jesus is the Final Word

In Martin Luther's Small Catechism, Jesus gets the last word regarding our eternal fate. Eternal life awaits us because Jesus "has purchased and freed [us] 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." Some verses in the Bible may sound like we are condemned to eternal punishment, but Luther emphasizes that the Word of Christ's mercy far outshines words of judgment, even those found in the Bible. Drawing upon the Christmas story, Luther famously said that the Bible is but the swaddling clothes of Christ: "Simple and lowly are these swaddling clothes, but dear is the treasure, Christ, who lies in them."

UPCOMING COMMEMORATIONS

Stephen, Deacon and Martyr - Friday, December 26, 2025

On the second day of Christmas, the church remembers Stephen who was a deacon and the first martyr of the church. He was one of those seven upon whom the apostles laid hands after they had been chosen to serve widows and others in need. Later, Stephen's preaching angered the temple authorities, and they ordered him to be put to death by stoning, with Saul (later Paul) as one of the observers. As he died, he witnessed to his faith and spoke of a vision of heaven.

John, Apostle and Evangelist - Saturday, December 27, 2025

On the third day of Christmas, the church remembers John, the son of Zebedee who was a fisherman and one of the Twelve. John, his brother James, and Peter were the three who witnessed the light of the transfiguration of Jesus. John and James once made known their desire to hold positions of power in the kingdom of God. Jesus' response showed them that service to others was the sign of God's reign in the world. Tradition has attributed authorship of the gospel and the three epistles bearing his name to the apostle John. John is a saint for Christmas through his proclamation that the Word became flesh and lived among us, that the light of God shines in the darkness, and that we are called to love one another as Christ has loved us.

December 28 - The Holy Innocents, Martyrs

On the fourth day of Christmas, the church remembers the infant martyrs who were the children of Bethlehem, two years old and younger. Feeling threatened by the birth of a new "king", King Herod killed these innocent ones shortly after the birth of Jesus (see Matthew 2:16-18). Saint Augustine, a North African church leader, called these innocents "buds, killed by the frost of persecution the moment they showed themselves." Those linked to Jesus through their youth and innocence encounter the same hostility Jesus encounters later in his ministry.

GOSPEL MESSAGE

What Really Matters

“All the world should be registered” (Luke 2:1). This announcement from the emperor was an order for all people to stand up and be counted, to prove their worth by stating their name, their lineage, and the details of their existence, like the stats on the back of a trading card.

But an angel made a different sort of announcement: “This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger” (Luke 2:12). The shepherds would need to look for a baby just lying there, doing nothing but existing in all his God-given glory.

This baby is such good news in a world that tells us every day, in every possible way, that we need to prove our worth, that we need to convince the world and everyone around us that we matter. In what ways do you repeatedly try to prove your worth to the world? To your friends and family and colleagues? To yourself? To God?

What would it feel like—in your body, in your heart, in your gut—to just exist in all your God-given glory? To remember that the Savior of the world came to us as a baby who couldn’t do a single thing besides lie in the straw? And what would it be like for you—for all of us—to live each day in response to this wild grace?

Each of us matters to God, who sent Jesus into the world for us and all creation. God loves us, claims us in baptism, and continues to sustain us in holy communion. This indeed is good news of great joy for all people. Glory to God!