**ZION LUTHERAN CHURCH, WOODLAND, MI**

**Christmas Day, December 25, 2022**

**Theme: The ABCs of Christmas**

**\*If you are listening in your car, please tune your radio to FM 87.7\***



**ANNOUNCEMENTS & PRELUDE**

**Gathering**

Leader: O come, all ye faithful, Joyful and triumphant,  
**People: O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem.**Leader: Come and behold Him, Born the King of Angels!  
Leader: O come, let us adore Him, O come, let us adore Him,  
**People: O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord.**

**INVOCATION**

(John Suter)

Send, O God, into the darkness of this troubled world,  
the light of your Son.  
Let the star of our hope touch the minds of all people  
with the bright beams of mercy and truth;  
and so direct our steps that we may ever walk in the way revealed to us,  
as the shepherds of Bethlehem walked with joy  
to the manger where he dwelled,  
who now and ever reigns in our hearts,  
Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

**GATHERING HYMN: “O Come All Ye Faithful” ELW 283**



**OPENING PRAYER**

by Rev. F. Schaefer

God of grace and providence, we stand amazed at the miracle of the incarnation.   Make us ready to receive your great gift in Jesus Christ once again as we celebrate Christmas.  By your Holy Spirit enable us to understand the true meaning of Christmas. On this day especially we invite you to be present with us as we open gifts, as we visit with friends and family, and as we contemplate what Christmas means for us. And be with joy and peace in the lives of people around the world, especially those who must be apart from loved ones, those who have no meal to share and no guest to host.  On this day, be with us in a special way through Jesus, your gift to us.  Amen.

We’re glad you’re here. I want to share a story with you. It’s a story you might know well; one you may have heard before. This morning, I want to tell you this story with something else we know well, our alphabet.

**A** is for an angel, Gabriel, who began the story with a greeting:

“Good morning! You’re beautiful with God’s beauty, Beautiful inside and out! God be with you!” *Luke 1.28, The Message*

**B**is for Bethlehem, where our story takes place. People traveled from far and wide to arrive in the city; it was a very busy place.

**C** is for a census (that’s a counting of all the people) the reason so many people filled the city of Bethlehem.

**D** is for the donkey that carried a family on their long journey to Bethlehem to be counted.

**E** is for exhausted, that’s how everyone felt when they arrived – tired from all the travelling.

**F** is for family: Mary and Joseph and their new baby Jesus, who was born that night in Bethlehem.

**HYMN  “O Little Town of Bethlehem” ELW 279**



**G** is for the Good News about to be shared with all the earth. This is what was said:

**Gospel** **Luke 2:8-16**

The holy gospel according to Luke.

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

8In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. 9Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 10But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see — I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: 11to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. 12This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." 13And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,  
 14"Glory to God in the highest heaven,  
 and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"  
15When 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." 16So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger.

The gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, O Christ.**

**H** is for herds, all the animals that were present in the stable, and the flocks of sheep in the field with the shepherds when they heard the good news.

**I** is for our imaginations, stirred by this story!

**HYMN “Go Tell it on the Mountain” ELW 290**



**J** is for joy the excitement and happiness that a new baby, and now, this special night brings.

**K** is for kindness, shown by the innkeeper that night, allowing a tired family to stay in the stable when there was no room in the inn.

**L** is for the love we share with one another all through the year and especially at Christmas.

**M** is for the manger, it is usually used to hold food for animals, but this time it held the baby because he had no crib.

**HYMN  “Away in a Manger” ELW 277**



**Creed**

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,**

**creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God’s only Son, our Lord,**

**who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,**

**born of the virgin Mary,**

**suffered under Pontius Pilate,**

**was crucified, died, and was buried;**

**he descended to the dead.\***

**On the third day he rose again;**

**he ascended into heaven,**

**he is seated at the right hand of the Father,**

**and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,**

**the holy catholic church,**

**the communion of saints,**

**the forgiveness of sins,**

**the resurrection of the body,**

**and the life everlasting. Amen.**

\*Or, “he descended into hell,” another translation of this text in widespread use.

**N** is for Noel, another word for Christmas. It means new birth, that’s what happened in our story, and it happens every year.

**O** is for offering, there were many gifts for the baby; we even have some to share now!

**Sharing Our Gifts**

**Carol: *What Child is This? (vs. 1-2)***

**OFFERTORY “What Child is This” ELW 296 ( vs. 3)**



**OFFERTORY PRAYER**

May the gifts we share be from the heart, just as yours was that day, God of Bethlehem.  May they serve those who look for welcome,

those who struggle with loss and grief,

those who need to be blessed by hope

This we pray in the name of your Child, Jesus.  Amen.

**THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE**

Now, may Bethlehem’s Child bless you!  
**And also bless you!**  
Now, may the children of God open their hearts.  
**We offer them to the One who loves us each and every morning.**  
Now, may we join in the songs of the angels.  
**We join our voices with those of every time and place.**

**Holy, holy, holy are you, God of all turned away by the world.**  
**Creation joins the angels in praising you.**  
**Hosanna in the highest!**

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.

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.

**Invitation to Communion**

Come to the banquet, for all is now ready.

**communion**

\**continuous*

*\*People are welcome to kneel at the altar rail for a time of prayer after they receive their communion elements*

**Hymns:**

**“Good Christian Friends, Rejoice” ELW 285**



**“Love Has Come” ELW 292**

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**POST COMMUNION PRAYER**

By the power of your Holy Spirit,  
unite us with Christ and all who share this feast,  
just as you send us out to be his presence in and for your world.

Give us courage to be your people,  
to show your justice, grace, mercy, peace, and love,  
and to be a part of your transformation of our world  
until the day when the baby whose birth we celebrate this morning  
comes again in peace  
and we sing your praise and glory forever.

Amen.

~ written by Rev. Andy James,

**P** is for prayer and praise and pondering, all different ways people reacted the amazing thing that happened. We pray and praise and ponder together:

**Prayers of Intercession**

With wonder and thanksgiving for Christ’s coming into the world, we pray for the church, the life of the earth, and the whole human family.

*A brief silence.*

The church in every land makes a joyful noise to herald your coming, O God. We give thanks for poets, musicians, and hymn writers who give voice to our praise, and for all who lead the church’s worship. We pray especially for Grace Lutheran Church in Vassar and Rev. Paulette Cummings. God of grace,

**hear our prayer.**

This day dawns with new hope for all living things, and from ocean depths to mountain peaks the earth rejoices. Inspire in us an urgent zeal to protect the planet and renew its resources. God of grace,

**hear our prayer.**

Bring heavenly peace to this world and an end to armed conflict. Raise up leaders in every nation who will honor human rights and establish equal justice for all people. Give courage to all who speak out against oppression and advocate for the powerless. God of grace,

**hear our prayer.**

Guard the lives of any in danger, especially those who work to protect others. Lead any who are in desperate circumstances to sanctuary, help, and safety. Grant rest to the weary and soothe those who are troubled. We pray especially for the people of Ukraine. God of grace,

**hear our prayer.**

Bless all who gather to worship on this holy day. Be present at our tables and celebrations, and watch over those who travel. Sustain charities, outreach ministries, and food pantries that give generously to people in need. God of grace,

**hear our prayer.**

In Christ we have beheld your glory, full of grace and truth. We give thanks for those in every generation who reflect the light of Christ. May their witness shine forth in our time. God of grace,

**hear our prayer.**

Pondering the mystery of eternal love made flesh in Christ Jesus, we commend all for whom we pray to the mercy of God.

**Amen.**

**Q** is for quiet, the deep peace that Christmas brings – knowing that God is with us.

**R**is for revelation, God showing us who God is (in a little baby born one night)

**S** is for one special star that shone bright in the night showing wise ones the way to Jesus.

**HYMN “Infant Holy, Infant Lowly” ELW 276**

A picture containing diagram

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**T** is for trust, the confidence we have in God.

**U**is for unity, all different people brought together tonight to celebrate God’s love!

**V** is for vulnerable, a little child needs to be cared for, protected–that’s our job.

**W** is for wonder– our amazement at the beauty of how much God loves us.

**HYMN “The Bells of Christmas” ELW 298 *( vs. 1-4)***



**X** is for Xmas, the x is actually the symbol for Christ – it is the first letter of the Greek word.

**Y** is for You! here to celebrate and worship.

**Z**is for zeal, the passion with which we share the Good News and God’s love, tonight.

**LIGHTING OF THE CHRIST CANDLE**

We give thanks for the light of hope—unrelenting and inexplicable.  
**Our hope in Christ shines on.**We give thanks for the light of peace—strong and unafraid.  
**The peace of Christ lights our way.**We give thanks for the light of joy—persistent and unpredictable.  
**The joy of Christ brightens our lives.**We give thanks for the light of love—hot and holy.  
**The love of Christ comforts and challenges.**Now let us light the Christ candle as we celebrate the birth of Jesus.  
**Thank you, God, for your light in this world through Jesus Christ.**The light shines in the darkness.  
***And the darkness has not overcome it.***

*(by Joanna Harder)*

**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**  
Let us go,  
**to join the angels in singing**  
**of God’s glory and grace.**  
Let us go to share the good news,  
**that Jesus, the brother**  
**of the vulnerable and forgotten**  
**is in our midst still.**  
Let us go to offer  
peace and goodwill to everyone,  
**joining the Spirit in telling**  
**of all we have seen and heard.**

**SENDING HYMN “Joy to the World” ELW 267**

  
  
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Erin Klassen is in team ministry at Deer Park United Church in Calgary, Alberta, Canada.

**THANK YOU TO ALL WHO SERVED TODAY:**

**Presider: Pastor Becky Ebb Speese**

**Musician: Martha Yoder**

**Elder: Dan Utterback**

**Trustee: Mike Johnson**

**Offering Counters: Doug Mackenzie & Mike Johnson**

**Safety Person: Jerry Engle**

**This week at Zion:**

* Pastor Becky on vacation through Monday, January 2
* Men’s Coffee, 8 AM Wednesday, December 28
* **Newsletter deadline, 8 PM Wednesday, December 28**

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

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* **Reminder**: During the heating season, please leave the Sunday School classroom doors open when not in use otherwise the opening area will be very cold.  Please close the doors to the Sanctuary and Fellowship Hall when they are not in use.  Thank you.
* **ELCA Good Gifts** - The Christmas tree in the Fellowship Hall is decorated with a variety of Good Gift ornaments of animals and other needs.  You may take any of the ornaments you want.  You may include your donation on your offering envelopes and write what it is for. Thank you
* **Annual Meeting:** Please plan to attend the Annual Meeting on January 15th.  This is an important meeting to elect officers and board members as well as other items requiring congregational approval.  One item for congregational consideration is approving an expenditure to upgrade and improve church signage.  There will be a potluck dinner following the meeting.  Mark your calendars and plan to be at Zion on January 15th.
* **All gifts given through the congregation to Lutheran World Relief** (you can indicate your gift on your offering envelope) will be doubled up to $200,00 through December 31.