

A Service of Christmas Lessons & Carols

Holy Communion | 9:00 a.m., December 29, 2024



Welcome to worship this morning!

Please know that **children** are welcome to remain in worship; they are also welcome to take a break in our “Kid’s Korner” in the Gathering Space where the service audio is played through speakers. **Bathrooms** are located down the hall, past the church office. **Hymns** are printed in the red book (ELW) available in the pew rack.

We practice **open communion** at St. Matthew, meaning all who desire the sacrament of Holy Communion are welcome. If you prefer, you may also come forward for a blessing. During the distribution of Holy Communion, ushers will direct the congregation forward to receive communion. The pastor will distribute communion wafers, which you may intinct (dip) into red wine, or white grape juice, held by communion assistants. Please do not drink from the chalices. Gluten free wafers are also available. The pastor will deliver the sacrament to anyone unable to come forward. You may also use a pre-filled communion kit, available at the usher’s table. All are welcome!

PRELUDE

WELCOME

The angel said to [the shepherds], “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 Christ, the Lord” (Luke 2:10-11).

As we gather, we hear again the good news the angels proclaimed: God has come for all people through the birth of the one named Jesus. Through Bethlehem’s manger God comes into the chaos, messiness, and vulnerability of the world. In all things and at all times, we rejoice that God comes to save us and reigns in love. We come to adore Jesus who is Savior, Christ, and Lord.

THANKSGIVING FOR THE WORD INCARNATE

Holy God,

Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace, Wonderful Counselor,
at the birth of time your Word brought light into the world,
and throughout the ages, you proclaim newness of life.

For your wondrous Word, we thank you, O God.

We thank you, O God.

In the fullness of time, your Word became flesh,
to shine in our world's darkness,
to speak peace to all people,
and to welcome us as members of your family.
For your loving Word, we adore you, O God.
We adore you, O God.

Grant us now the gift of your Spirit,
that held, nourished, and protected by your Word,
we may live as your children,
bearing your goodness throughout the world.
For your powerful Word, we praise you, O God.
We praise you, O God.

All glory to you, holy God,
now and forever. **Amen.**

OPENING HYMN: *Once in Royal David's City*

ELW 269

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

All-powerful and unseen God, the coming of your light into our world has brightened weary hearts with peace. Call us out of darkness, and empower us to proclaim the birth of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

THE FIRST LESSON: Genesis 1:1-5, 14-18

God creates the heavens, the earth, and light.

A reading from the book of Genesis:

¹In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, ²the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. ³Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light.

⁴And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. ⁵God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

¹⁴And God said, "Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years, ¹⁵and let them be lights in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth." And it was so. ¹⁶God made the two great lights — the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night — and the stars. ¹⁷God set them in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth, ¹⁸to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

ANTHEM: *Creator of the Stars of Night*

Dale Wood

Creator of the stars of night,
Thy people's everlasting light,
O Christ, thou Savior of us all,
We pray thee, hear us when we call.

To thee the travail deep was known
That made the whole creation groan
Till thou, Redeemer, shouldest free
Thine own in glorious liberty.

And when the world drew on toward night,
Thou camest, not in splendor bright
As monarch, but the humble child
Of Mary, blameless mother, mild.

At thy great name of Jesus, now
All knees must bend, all hearts must bow:
And things celestial thee shall own,
Of things terrestrial, Lord alone.

Come in thy holy might, we pray;
Redeem us for eternal day
From ev'ry pow'r of darkness, when
Thou judgest all the sons of men.

To God the Father, God the Son,
And God the Spirit, Three in One,
Laud, honor, might, and glory be
From age to age eternally.
Amen.

Creator of the Stars of Night, Dale Wood © 1965, The H.W. Gray Co., Inc. All rights reserved.

THE SECOND LESSON: Isaiah 61:1-3, 11

Isaiah announces good news to the people of God.

A reading from the prophet Isaiah:

¹The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me,
because the LORD has anointed me;
he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed,
to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and release to the prisoners;
²to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor,
and the day of vengeance of our God;
to comfort all who mourn;
³to provide for those who mourn in Zion —
to give them a garland instead of ashes,
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,
the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit.
They will be called oaks of righteousness,
the planting of the LORD, to display his glory.
⁴For as the earth brings forth its shoots,
and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up,
so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise
to spring up before all the nations.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

CAROL: *It Came upon the Midnight Clear*

ELW 282

THE THIRD LESSON: Micah 5:2-5a

The king will come from Bethlehem.

A reading from the book of Micah:

² But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah,
who are one of the little clans of Judah,
from you shall come forth for me
one who is to rule in Israel,
whose origin is from of old,
from ancient days.

³Therefore he shall give them up until the time
when she who is in labor has brought forth;
then the rest of his kindred shall return
to the people of Israel.

⁴And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the LORD,
in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God.
And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great
to the ends of the earth;

⁵and he shall be the one of peace.
If the Assyrians come into our land
and tread upon our soil,
we will raise against them seven shepherds
and eight installed as rulers.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

CAROL: *O Little Town of Bethlehem*

ELW 279

THE FOURTH LESSON: Luke 1:26-35, 38

The angel Gabriel salutes the blessed Virgin Mary.

A reading from the Gospel of Luke:

²⁶In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, ²⁷to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." ²⁹But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus.

³²He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. ³³He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." ³⁴Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" ³⁵The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. ³⁸Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

CAROL: *Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming*

ELW 272

THE FIFTH LESSON: Matthew 1:18-25

St. Matthew tells of the birth of Jesus.

A reading from the Gospel of Matthew:

¹⁸Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. ²⁰But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." ²²All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

²³"Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,

and they shall name him Emmanuel," which means, "God is with us."

²⁴When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife, ²⁵but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

CAROL: *Infant Holy, Infant Lowly*

ELW 276

THE SIXTH LESSON: Luke 2:8-35

The shepherds go to see the Savior and Jesus receives his name.

A reading from the Gospel of Luke:

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. ¹⁷When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; ¹⁸and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. ¹⁹But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. ²⁰The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

²¹After eight days had passed, it was time to circumcise the child; and he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

²²When the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord ²³(as it is written in the law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord"), ²⁴and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, "a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons."

²⁵Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. ²⁶It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. ²⁷Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him what was customary under the law, ²⁸Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying,

²⁹"Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace,
according to your word;

³⁰for my eyes have seen your salvation,

³¹which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,

³²a light for revelation to the Gentiles
and for glory to your people Israel."

³³And the child's father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. ³⁴Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, "This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed ³⁵so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed — and a sword will pierce your own soul too."

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

ANTHEM: *Where Shepherds Lately Knelt*

Carl Schalk, text by Jaroslav J. Vajda

Where shepherds lately knelt and kept the angel's word,
I come in half-belief, a pilgrim strangely stirred;
But there is room and welcome there for me,
But there is room and welcome there for me.

In that unlikely place I find him as they said:
Sweet, newborn Babe, how frail, and in a manger bed:
A still small Voice to cry one day for me,
A still small Voice to cry one day for me.

How should I not have known Isaiah would be there,
His prophecies fulfilled? With pounding heart, I stare:
A Child, a Son, the Prince of Peace – for me,
A Child, a Son, the Prince of Peace – for me.

Can I, will I forget how Love was born and burned
Its way into my heart: unasked, unforced, unearned,
To live and die, and not alone for me,
To live and die, and not alone for me.

Where Shepherds Lately Knelt, Jaroslav J. Vajda and Carl Schalk © 1987, Augsburg Publishing House. All rights reserved.

THE SEVENTH LESSON: John 1:1-14

St. John unfolds the mystery of the incarnation.

A reading from the Gospel of John:

¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being ⁴in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. ⁵The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

⁶There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. ⁸He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. ⁹The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

¹⁰He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. ¹¹He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. ¹²But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, ¹³who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

¹⁴And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

CAROL: *Love Has Come*

ELW 292

RESPONSIVE PRAYER

Glory to God in the highest,

and peace to God's people on earth.

Blessed are you, Prince of peace.

You rule the earth with truth and justice.

Send your gift of peace to all nations of the world.

Blessed are you, Son of Mary.

You share our humanity.

**Have mercy on the sick, the dying,
and all who suffer this day.**

Blessed are you, Son of God.

You dwell among us as the Word made flesh.

**Reveal yourself to us in word and sacrament
that we may bear your light to all the world.**

PEACE

The Peace of Christ be with you always.

And also with you.

OFFERING

At this time, ushers will pass the offering plate if you desire to give a financial gift. Donations may also be given online at stmatthewavon.org/give or mailed directly to the church. Thank you for your continued generosity and faithfulness!

OFFERTORY HYMN: O Holy Night

Adolphe Adam, text by John S. Dwight

O ho - ly night! the stars are bright - ly
shin - ing; It is the night of our dear Sav - ior's birth.
Long lay the world in sin and er - ror pin - ing, Till he ap -
peared and the soul felt its worth. A thrill of hope - the
wea - ry world re-joic - es, For yon - der breaks a new and glo - rious morn!
Fall on your knees! O hear the an - gel voic - es! O
night di - vine, O night when Christ was born! O
night, O ho - ly night, O night di - vine!

PRESENTATION HYMN

All rise as the gifts are brought forward.



Now bring him in-cense, gold, and myrrh; come, peas-ant, king, to own him.



The King of kings sal - va - tion brings; let lov - ing hearts en - throne him.



Raise, raise the song on high, the vir - gin sings her lul - la-by;



joy, joy, for Christ is born, the babe, the son of Mar - y!

OFFERING PRAYER

God of heaven and earth,
from the beginning, you have called forth life,
in which you take delight.
The trees, the fields, and the seas sing for joy.
Bless now these gifts, received from your bounty,
that we may join the chorus of creation
to tell of your salvation from day to day.
Amen.

HOLY COMMUNION

The Lord be with you. And al - so 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.

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy,
that we should at all times and in all places
give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God,
through our Savior Jesus Christ.

In the wonder and mystery of the Word made flesh
you have opened the eyes of faith
to a new and radiant vision of your glory,
that, beholding the God made visible,
we may be drawn to love the God whom we cannot see.

And so, with all the choirs of angels,
with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven,
we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

SANCTUS

ELW Setting 3



Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow'r and might,



heav-en and earth are full of your glo - ry. Ho - san - na. Ho -



san-na. Ho - san - na in the high - est. Bless-ed is he who



comes in the name of the Lord. Ho-san - na in the high - est.

Holy One, the beginning and the end, the giver of life:

Blessed are you for the birth of creation.

Blessed are you in the darkness and in the light.

Blessed are you for your promise to your people.

Blessed are you in the prophets' hopes and dreams.

Blessed are you for Mary's openness to your will.

Blessed are you for your Son Jesus, the Word made flesh.

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.
Let us proclaim the mystery of faith:
Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

With this bread and cup
we remember your Word dwelling among us, full of grace and truth.
We remember our new birth in his death and resurrection.
We look with hope for his coming.
Come, Lord Jesus.

Holy God, we long for your Spirit.
Come among us. Bless this meal.
May your Word take flesh in us.
Awaken your people.
Fill us with your light.
Bring the gift of peace on earth.
Come, Holy Spirit.

All praise and glory are yours,
Holy One of Israel,
Word of God incarnate,
Power of the Most High, **Amen.**

LORD'S PRAYER

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.

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

At this time, ushers will direct the congregation to come forward for communion. You will receive a communion wafer from the pastor, which you are invited to intinct (dip) into the red wine or white grape juice held by the communion assistants. Please do not drink from the chalices. You may also use a pre-filled communion kit in your seat or indicate to an usher to have the pastor deliver the sacrament to your seat.

A child has been born for us, a Son given to us.
Come, receive the gift of Jesus.

THE DISTRIBUTION

The body of Christ, given for you.

The blood of Christ, shed for you.

BLESSING AFTER COMMUNION

May the body and blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in his grace. **Amen.**

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Merciful God,
we thank you for Jesus, who is our heavenly food.
Strengthened by this goodness,
send us forth to announce your peace,
comfort the afflicted,
and share the good news of great joy.
Amen.

BENEDICTION

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 everlasting peace of Jesus
who is Savior, Christ, and Lord.

Almighty God, Father, † Son, and Holy Spirit,
bless you and keep you now and forever. **Amen.**

SENDING HYMN: *Hark! The Herald Angels Sing*

ELW 270

DISMISSAL

Glory to God in the highest!
Peace to God's people on earth!
Go in peace. Share the gift of Jesus.
Thanks be to God.

POSTLUDE

MANY THANKS FOR TODAY'S VOLUNTEER WORSHIP LEADERS

Ushers: Kevin Reichler

Acolyte: Caitlin Byrne

Assisting Minister: Kathy Alsgaard

Live Stream: Ben Wright

Lector: Kathy Alsgaard, George Reider, & Jane Hanson

Altar Guild: Ellen Ericson & MJ Bennett-Sandell

STAFF

Pastor: The Rev. Dr. Brian R. Rajcok – pastorbrian@stmatthewavon.org

Associate Pastor: Rev. Ryan Heckman – revryan@stmatthewavon.org

Director of Music: Sarah Schiener-Redenz – music@stmatthewavon.org

Office Administrator: Paul Martin – office@stmatthewavon.org or (860) 673-3301

Sexton: Roy Zurell – contact the office

VISIT US ONLINE

Website: www.stmatthewavon.org

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Instagram: @stmatthewlutheranavon

THE WEEK AHEAD

Office Closed Next Week			
Sunday	9:00 am: Lessons & Carols Service		
Thursday	2:00 pm: Centering Prayer		
Sunday	9:00 a.m.: Sanctuary Worship w/ Holy Communion	10:20-11:20 am: Sunday School & Adult Forum	5:00 pm: Confirmation Class

ANNOUNCEMENTS

2025 ANNUAL MEETING

Mark your calendars for our Annual Meeting on **Sunday, January 19th**, immediately following the morning worship service. Join us as we review and discuss the Annual Reports, providing valuable insights into the milestones and accomplishments of the past year. Your active participation is crucial as we come together to shape the future of our community. We look forward to your presence and engagement in this important gathering.