

Christmas Eve Family Service

4:30 p.m., December 24, 2024



Merry Christmas! Welcome to worship this afternoon!

We are glad you're here! 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.

All are welcome!

PRELUDE

CHRISTMAS PROCLAMATION

Many ages after God created the heavens and the earth
and formed humanity in God's own image;
long after the great flood, when God set the rainbow in the clouds as a sign of
the covenant;
twenty-one centuries from the time the promise was given to Abraham and
Sarah;
thirteen centuries after Moses led the people of Israel out of Egypt;
eleven centuries from the time of Ruth and the judges;
a thousand years after the anointing of David as king;
in fulfillment of the times and years and months and days discerned by the
prophets;
in the one hundred and ninety-fourth Olympiad;
the seven hundred and fifty-second year from the foundation of the city of
Rome;
the forty-second year of the reign of Octavian Augustus;
the whole earth being at peace,
Jesus Christ, eternal God and Son of the eternal Father,
willing to hallow the world by his coming in mercy,
was born of the virgin Mary in Bethlehem of Judea.
Today is the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, God made flesh.

WELCOME

CHRISTMAS DIALOGUE AND PRAYER

Jesus Christ is the Light of the world!

He is the Light no darkness can overcome.

At the darkest time of year we gather to celebrate the great light of our salvation.
With the heavenly host we sing, "Glory to God in the highest heaven."

In Christ, God's Word is made flesh and lives among us.

With the shepherds, we will tell of the wonders we have seen and heard.

May the grace and truth of Christ be with you. **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.**

The congregation may be seated.

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH & CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

Pastor Brian

Long-ing for light, we wait in dark-ness. Long-ing for
truth, we turn to you. Make us your own,
your ho - ly peo - ple, light for the world to see.
Christ, be our light! Shine in our hearts. Shine through the
dark - ness. Christ, be our light! Shine in your
church gath - ered to - day.

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FIRST READING: Isaiah 9:2-7

This poem promises deliverance from Assyrian oppression, a hope based on the birth of a royal child with a name full of promise. While Judah's king will practice justice and righteousness, the real basis for faith lies in God's passion for the people: The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this!

A reading from the prophet Isaiah:

- ² 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.
- ³ 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.
- ⁴ 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.
- ⁵ For all the boots of the tramping warriors
and all the garments rolled in blood
shall be burned as fuel for the fire.
- ⁶ 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.
- ⁷ His authority shall grow continually,
and there shall be endless peace
for the throne of David and his kingdom.
He will establish and uphold it
with justice and with righteousness
from this time onward and forevermore.
The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

SECOND READING: 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.

We will now read from the Epistle to Titus:

¹¹ The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all, ¹² training us to renounce impiety and worldly passions, and in the present age to live lives that are self-controlled, upright, and godly, ¹³ while we wait for the blessed hope and the manifestation of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. ¹⁴ He it is who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION: *Angels We Have Heard on High*

ELW 289 (v. 1)

HOLY GOSPEL: Luke 2:1-20

God's greatest gift comes as a baby in a manger. Angels announce the "good news of great joy" and proclaim God's blessing of peace.

The Holy Gospel according to Luke.

Glory to you, O Lord.

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

⁸ In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹ Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰ 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: ¹¹ to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹² This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.” ¹³ And 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!”

¹⁵ 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.” ¹⁶ So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. ¹⁷ When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; ¹⁸ and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. ¹⁹ But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. ²⁰ 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.

SERMON:

Rev. Ryan

HYMN OF THE DAY: *It Came Upon a Midnight Clear*

ELW 282

NICENE CREED

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

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
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.
For us and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary
and became truly human.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.
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.
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church.
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Filled with good news of great joy, let us offer our prayers for the church, the earth, and all people. I invite you into a prayerful posture of kneeling, standing, or sitting.

A brief silence.

Angels sing with praise, and shepherds run to Christ's manger with haste. As we glorify and praise you here this evening at St Matthew Lutheran Church, fill us with your Holy Spirit who will send us out into the world, proclaiming the salvation you have revealed this night. God of grace, **receive our prayer.**

The seas roar, the trees rattle their acclaim and the streams and rolling hills sing for joy at the birth of your Word, Jesus Christ into the world this night. As creation resounds with praise, inspire us with awe, reverence, and a renewed care for all that fills the fields, skies, and seas. God of grace, **receive our prayer.**

O God, the nations declare your glory. Uphold the leaders of the earth with your justice and righteousness. Break the rod of the oppressor in every land, and bring peace where there is conflict. We especially plead this Christmas Eve for the wars in Ukraine, Russia, Israel, Gaza, Sudan, Yemen, Myanmar and in other countries to come to an end. Let peace on earth reign. God of grace, **receive our prayer.**

The holy family finds shelter around the animals' manger. Draw near tonight to persons experiencing homelessness, those who are alone this holiday season, and all for whom this world makes no room. Wrap all your children in bands of love and mercy. God of grace, **receive our prayer.**

A child is born this night. Holy God, we pray for the children of this congregation. That you bring them joy and unconditional love from every corner of their lives. We pray for Sunday School, Confirmation and Youth Group here at St Matthew. That the children of this congregation come to know your unending love and that they build life-long connections and relationships here at St Matthew. God of grace, **receive our prayer**

God of rest, a light shines on the weary. Watch over those who are in need of healing and good health. Bring comfort, rest and strength to those in this congregation who cannot be present tonight. God, be with us in our joys and in our sorrows. God of grace, **receive our prayer.**

O Holy God, the heavenly host praises you. With thanksgiving for Mary, Joseph, and all your saints, sustain us in the blessed hope revealed this night. Fashion us by their example into a people zealous for good deeds, sharing your love and mercy with all. God of grace, **receive our prayer.**

We commend these prayers to you, O God, trusting your grace made known to all, through the Word made flesh, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

PEACE

The Peace of Christ be with you always.

And also with you.

The congregation may be seated.

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, using the QR code in this bulletin, or mailed directly to the church. Thank you for your continued generosity and faithfulness!

OFFERTORY

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.**

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.**

THE GOSPEL OF THE INCARNATION: John 1:1-14

The minister lights a large candle from an altar candle, which symbolizes Christ, the Light of the world, of whom John's gospel speaks. The ushers light their candles from the minister's candle, then light the candle of each worshiper nearest the aisle. The lighted candle is never tilted but is always held upright when giving light to another. Sanctuary lights are dimmed.

In 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.

¹⁰He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. ¹¹He came to his own, and his own 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.

Chancel lights are dimmed.

HYMN OF LIGHT: *Silent Night, Holy 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, heav'nly 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 your holy face, with the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at your birth, Jesus, Lord, at your birth.

Lights turn back on; congregation extinguishes individual candles.

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 peace of the Christ child.

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

CLOSING HYMN: *Go Tell It On The Mountain*

ELW 290

DISMISSAL

Christ the Savior is born!
Go in peace. Proclaim the good news.

Thanks be to God.

POSTLUDE

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MANY THANKS FOR TODAY'S VOLUNTEER WORSHIP LEADERS

Assisting Minister: Will Abbott

Ushers: Kevin Reichler

STAFF

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

Associate Pastor: The 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

YouTube: @StMatthewAvon

Facebook: www.facebook.com/SaintMatthewLutheranChurch

Instagram: @stmatthewlutheranavon

THE WEEK AHEAD

Sunday	9am: Lessons & Carols Service w/ Holy Communion		
Tuesday	10am: A.A. (Open to All)		
Thursday	2pm: Centering Prayer		
Sunday	9am: Sanctuary Worship w/ Holy Communion	10:20am: Sunday School & Adult Forum	10:30am: Confirmation Class

ANNOUNCEMENTS

ADVENT GIFT LETTER

Rick Hanson, Council Vice President, has written a letter regarding the 2024 Staff Advent Gift. If you're interested in donating or learning more about this initiative, please read the letter included in Friday's weekly emails, or visit our website where you can view the letter on the Home Page.

Donations will be accepted via check or Vanco. If you choose to write a check, please include "Advent Gift" or "Christmas Gift" in the memo line. You may send the check directly to the office or place it in the collection plate on Sunday. If you wish to donate online, you may use the QR code at the end of this bulletin, or visit our website. There is a link on the home page that will take you to our online giving platform.

A SERVICE OF CHRISTMAS LESSONS & CAROLS

Sunday, December 29, 9:00 a.m.

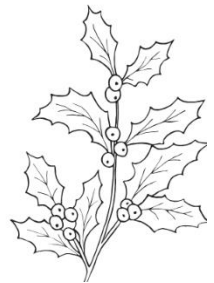
Join us next Sunday morning for a special service of lessons and carols with Holy Communion! We will hear readings tying together the whole Christmas story, from prophecy to fulfillment, and we will respond with joyous carols and anthems of the season. Set midway through the twelve days of Christmas, this is a wonderful way to continue celebrating the season.



Poinsettia Dedications



Sharon Yanke in memory of Arthur Yanke & Karl Goritz
Bob Hoffman in memory of Lisa Spoering
George Spoering in memory of loved ones
Wolf & Anita Mielert in memory of Dan Tuve
George & Carol Reider in memory of family
George & Carol Reider in memory of David & George
Robin Lindquist in memory of brother David
Robin Lindquist in memory of parents & grandparents
Ellen & Charlie Ericson in memory of loved ones
Kathy Alsgaard in memory of Tom Alsgaard
Sue Young in memory of Vaughn & David
Ernest Jaschinski, Eleanor & Malcolm Doyle in memory of our parents, Ernest & Martha
Jaschinski, sister Pauline & her husband Bob Poetzsch
Doreen O'Leary in memory of loved ones
Robin & Jack Pietrick in memory of loved ones
The Ware Family in memory of loved ones
Mj & John Sandell in memory of Carolyn Boswell
Mj & John Sandell in memory of Heather Wilson
Mj & John Sandell in memory of Elizabeth Wilson
Fred Krompegal in memory Shirley Krompegal & Fred E. Krompegal
The Jarka Family in memory of Madeline Jarka
Larry & Bev Anello in memory of Anne Hagopian
Mark & Pat Coslett in memory of loved ones
Jean Tuve in memory of loved ones
Donna Urbinati in loving memory of my beloved nephew Steven DeVeau
Paula Garza in memory of David Johnshoy
Lynn Metz in memory of loved ones
Ron Howard in memory of Mabel and in honor of our family
The Krompegal Family in memory of Richard Krompegal
Mike & Stacey Held in honor & memory of loved ones
Deb Brodeur in memory of loved ones



ONLINE GIVING

Make a one-time gift, or set-up recurring donations, via Vanco! You may use the QR code below to access the website, or visit: stmatthewavon.org/online-giving

If you have yet to return your 2025 Pledge Card, they are available in the narthex. You may fill one place it in the offering plate, or hand it to an Usher.

We ask those that wish to set-up recurring donations, please select the "GENERAL OPERATING FUND" and choose withdrawals to take place on either the 1st or 15th of the month. Thank you! If you have any difficulty, please contact the church office or see one of the Pastors after service!



St. Matthew Mission Statement:

St. Matthew Lutheran Church is a worshipping community called to proclaim God's love for all and to grow spiritually together. Challenged by Jesus' example, we strive to connect people of all ages, abilities, and needs, and to nurture them to be disciples of Christ. Guided by the Holy Spirit, we reach out to the wider community and welcome our neighbors to a life of worship, preaching, teaching, Christian care, service, and spiritual growth.

In Christ, We Are Digging Deep, Reaching Out, Changing Lives.