

CHESHIRE LUTHERAN CHURCH

Cheshire, Connecticut

The Rev. Dr. David Rowold, Pastor
The Rev. Louis Nuechterlein, Pastor Emeritus

CHRISTMAS EVE FESTIVAL COMMUNION

December 24, 2023

9:00 PM

Rejoice in the Lord whose birth and incarnation we remember this day. Welcome to our Christmas Eve Festival Communion Service. We are glad that you have joined us for worship this evening as we gather under the gentle reign of him whose birth we celebrate. May the grace and peace of this eucharistic celebration lead you to greater faith and service to our Lord.

THE ORDER FOR OUR FESTIVAL WORSHIP

PRELUDE - Bell Choir plays “The Holly and the Ivy” Arr. by McChesney

CONFESSION and FORGIVENESS

In the name of the Father, and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Amid the shadows of this world, let us confess our sin and welcome the light of God’s forgiveness.

(silence for reflection and self-examination)

God of grace and truth, **in Christ Jesus you come among us as light shining in the darkness. We confess that we have not welcomed the light, nor trusted the good news of great joy. Forgive us and renew our hope, so that we may live in the fullness of your love, trusting in the grace of Christ our Lord. Amen.**

The angel said, You shall call his name Jesus for he will save his people from their sins. With great joy, as a called and ordained servant of the Word made flesh and by his authority I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son + and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

(all stand)

PROCESSIONAL HYMN 379

we sing, standing

GREETING

Good news of great joy, light and life, grace and peace be with you all. **And also with you.**

CHRISTMAS DIALOG

O God, the ruler of ages eternal, you are without beginning or end: **Yet you choose to be born an infant in time. Praise to you, O Lord.**

O God, the invisible, you are the One whom nobody has seen or can see: **Yet you assume the face of the Son of Mary. Praise to you, O Lord.**

O God, the all-powerful, you hold the mountains in the palm of your hand: **Yet you let yourself be wrapped in swaddling clothes. Praise to you, O Lord.**

O God the eternal glory, innumerable angels acclaim you endlessly: **Yet you choose to be rocked to sleep by the songs of the daughter of David. Praise to you, O Lord.**

O God, the infinite, heaven and earth cannot contain you: **Yet you rest in the arms of Mary. Praise to you, O Lord.**

O God the perfect joy, you are the source of the happiness of heaven and earth: **Yet you cry as a little child. Praise to you, O Lord.**

O God, the eternal Word, you are the light of all created intelligence: **Yet you are laid in a manger and cannot even speak. Praise to you, O Lord. Amen.**

PRAYER OF THE DAY

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

Let us pray. O God, You make this most holy night to shine with the brightness of the true Light.

Grant that as we have known the mysteries of that Light on earth we may also come to the fullness of His joys in heaven; through the same Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

FIRST LESSON - Isaiah 9:2-7

This is the Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

ANTHEM - Parish Choir “Sing Gloria” by Katherine Davis; Frank Vasi, saxophone soloist

SECOND LESSON - Titus 2:11-14

This is the Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

GOSPEL PROCESSIONAL HYMN 368 vs 1 & 3
we sing, standing

CHRISTMAS GOSPEL - Luke 2:1-20

Before, all shout: Glory to you, O Lord!

After, all shout: Praise to you, O Christ!

HYMN 380 - *we sing, seated*

CHRISTMAS SERMON

NICENE CREED *(last page hymnal)*
all standing

PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH - *all may kneel*

Response: **Hear our Prayer!**

OFFERTORY

Bell Choir plays “Lullaby Carol” Arr. by Barbara Kinyon

OFFERTORY HYMN 370 vs 1 & 3

we sing, standing

page 177 - **SERVICE OF THE SACRAMENT**

Page 178 - **SANCTUS**

LORD’S PRAYER

page 179 - **THE WORDS OF OUR LORD**

SHARING OF THE PEACE

page 180 - **AGNUS DEI**
HOLY COMMUNION

During the distribution we sing **HYMNS 361, 364, 393**

POST-COMMUNION BLESSING

POST-COMMUNION PRAYER

CANDLELIGHT LITURGY

“The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.” (Isaiah 9:2)

On this holy night, we celebrate the coming of the Light, Jesus Christ, our Lord. We remember how our Savior came, not as a fierce warrior or a mighty king, but as the Babe of Bethlehem. The Only-Begotten Son of God became man, flesh and blood, and He laid aside His divine power and glory for you and me. Tonight, we rejoice in the great love that God has for each of us and receive again the most wonderful gift from God, the gift of Himself.

“Arise, shine, for the light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you.” (Isaiah 60:1)

May the light of Christ shine in each of us this night and all our lives. **Amen.**

The Light of Christ. **Thanks be to God.**

LESSON OF LIGHT - John 1:1-14

(As the lesson is read, the acolytes will pass the light. DO NOT tip the lit candle! Tip the unlit candle to pass the flame. As the flame is passed, the person with the lit candle may say, “The Light of Christ” and the one receiving it may reply, “Thanks be to God.”)

CANDLELIGHT HYMN 363 - *we sing, standing*

BENEDICTION

RECESSIONAL HYMN 387 - *we sing, standing*

DISMISSAL *(face church entrance)*

Filled with the joy of Christ’s birth, go in peace to love and serve our Lord. **Thanks be to God!**

POSTLUDE - “A Christmas Medley”
Arr. Frank Vasi

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All are invited to communion who have been baptized and instructed in the Faith; who repent of their sins; who are committed to Christ and to the mission of his church; and who believe with us that we receive and share our Savior's Body and Blood in, with, and under the bread and the wine of the Sacrament - as signs of his forgiveness and of our Christian family solidarity.

All who commune, kindly sign your names in our Communicant Register, which is located on the narthex shelf along side our Guest Register.

WORDS OF WELCOME! Once again, we stand amazed at the miracle of the Incarnation - Immanuel, God with us. Let us fill the sanctuary of the Lord with praise, "Glory to God in the highest." As the family of God, we greet one another. A special welcome to those visiting with us today.

THE RED POINSETTIAS adorning our chancel and nave are a gift from Steve and Jonathan Manke of Tower Farms; we thank them for their generosity. After tonight's Services of Worship they will be given to various members of our congregation.