

DO NOT BE AFRAID.
I bring you GOOD NEWS
of
GREAT JOY
for all the people. Luke 2:10

THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD: CHRISTMAS EVE
6:45 P.M.



ST. PAUL LUTHERAN CHURCH

God's Work, Our Hands

106 Maple Street | Reading, OH 452145

Phone: 513.821.0987 | Email: mail@stpaulreading.org

www.StPaulReading.org

facebook.com/stpaulcincinnati

**St. Paul Lutheran Church
106 Maple St.
Reading, OH 45215
513-821-0987**

Welcome!

We welcome you to this Christmas Eve service. We hope that you experience the joy and peace that the birth of Christ has brought into the world.

We would especially like to welcome those who are visiting with us this evening. We invite you to visit again, for worship at 10:30 am each Sunday. During the COVID-19 pandemic we are offering in-person worship, with safety precautions, as well as livestreaming the service on our website.

We are a community that serves the Lord Jesus Christ. We believe we are called to serve the world as His disciples, to love our neighbors as ourselves. We reach out to the community with a variety of projects, including supporting Valley Interfaith Community Resource Center in Lockland, as well as national and international agencies and missionaries. We encourage and support members of our own community through prayer, study, and social activities for adult and youth groups, as well as school-age children. New participants are welcome at all our activities and groups.

If you would like to know more about St. Paul, or need the help of a pastor, please call the church office at 513-821-0987 or email us at mail@stpaulreading.org.

† † † † † † † † † † † †

On this joyous Christmas Eve, we reach out to all worshipers with welcoming hearts and hands. May Christ, who is the Light of the World, drive away all darkness from our minds and plant his peace within us. Newcomers and cherished friends returning on this holy night, you are especially welcome. We welcome children to worship!

† † † † † † † † † † † †

The Christmas flowers beautifying our sanctuary this evening are given to the glory of God by:

- Lee and Jane Erbeck • Nancy Erbeck • Ron and Shirley Harbaugh • Ed and Kathy Hirt •
• Larry and Penny Huber • Carroll and Cindy Mayhugh • Jim and Linda Miller •
• Dennis and Joy Niefeld • Carole Replogle • Elinor Schieman • Joyce Spelman •

The Nativity of Our Lord: Christmas Eve

December 24, 2020

7:00 p.m. (special music at 6:45)

Preservice Music

Saxophone Quartet

Gathering

Welcome

Opening Hymn: "O Come, All Ye Faithful" (v. 1-3)

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1 O come, all ye faithful,
joyful and triumphant!
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem;
come and behold him,
born the king of angels: | 2 The highest, most holy,
light of light eternal,
born of a virgin, a mortal he comes;
Son of the Father
now in flesh appearing! <i>Refrain</i> |
| <i>Refrain</i>
O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him,
Christ the Lord! | 3 Sing, choirs of angels,
sing in exultation,
sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!
Glory to God
in the highest: <i>Refrain</i> |

Invocation

P: In the name of the Father and of the ✝ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C: **Amen.**

Opening Prayer

P: The Lord be with you.

C: **And also with you.**

P: Let us pray. Heavenly Father, you sent Jesus at just the right time. When we were powerless to save ourselves; you sent your Son to be our Savior. Open our hearts to the Good News of Jesus even as Jesus opened heaven's door to the world. We pray in Jesus' name.

C: **Amen.**

Special Music: "Still, Still, Still" Trad. Austrian text; Salzburg Melody, c. 1819

Responsive Reading: Titus 3:4-7

L: When the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared,

C: he saved us,

L: not because of any works of righteousness that we had done,

C: but according to his mercy,

L: through the water of rebirth

C: and renewal by the Holy Spirit.

L: This Spirit he poured out on us richly

C: through Jesus Christ our Savior,

L: so that, having been justified by his grace,

C: we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

Children's Hymn (via video): "Away in a Manger"

Children's Sermon

Hymn: "Infant Holy, Infant Lowly"

1 Infant holy, infant lowly,
for his bed a cattle stall;
oxen lowing, little knowing
Christ the child is Lord of all.
Swiftly winging, angels singing,
bells are ringing, tidings bringing:
Christ the child is Lord of all!
Christ the child is Lord of all!

2 Flocks were sleeping, shepherds keeping
vigil till the morning new
saw the glory, heard the story,
tidings of a gospel true.
Thus rejoicing, free from sorrow,
praises voicing, greet the morrow:
Christ the child was born for you!
Christ the child was born for you!

The Word

Old Testament Reading: Isaiah 9:2-7

²The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;

those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness,
on them has light shined.

³You have multiplied the nation;
you have increased its joy;

4

they rejoice before you

as with joy at the harvest,

as they are glad when they divide the spoil.

⁴ For the yoke of his burden,

and the staff for his shoulder,

the rod of his oppressor,

you have broken as on the day of Midian.

⁵ For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult

and every garment rolled in blood

will be burned as fuel for the fire.

⁶ For to us a child is born,

to us a son is given;

and the government shall be upon his shoulder,

and his name shall be called

Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,

Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

⁷ Of the increase of his government and peace

there will be no end.

He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom,

establishing and upholding it

with justice and righteousness

from that time on and forever.

The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.

This is the Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

The Lighting of the Christ Candle: Our Waiting is Over!

We Celebrate the Birth of Christ

P: In the season of Advent we have used the Advent wreath and its candles to help us get ready for this great celebration of the birth of Christ.

Our waiting is over! Today we celebrate the birth of Jesus the Christ, Jesus the Good Shepherd, Jesus who forgives our sins, Jesus who will come again, Jesus the son of Mary, the Son of David, and the very Son of God! He brings hope, peace, joy, love, and salvation to us and to the world!

Prayer for God's Help

P: Let us pray. Dear Father, as we light the Christ candle today, may we celebrate with full joy the birth of your Son, Jesus the Christ.

C: Amen!

Lighting of the Candle

The Christ candle is lit.

P: We light this candle with great joy and celebration, because Christ is born in Bethlehem. God's Son, the Light of the World, has come into the world to be our Savior! The light shines in the darkness.

C: And the darkness has not overcome it.

Prayer of Hope

P: Father, as we light this candle, we rejoice in the birth of your Son. May we worship him, welcome him, and make room for him in our hearts. O come, let us adore him! Amen!

Hymn: "Joy to the World" (v. 1)

1 Joy to the world, the Lord is come!
Let earth receive her king;
let ev'ry heart prepare him room
and heav'n and nature sing,
and heav'n and nature sing,
and heav'n, and heav'n and nature sing.

Gospel Reading: Luke 2:1–7

¹In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. ²This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³And all went to be registered, each to his own town. ⁴And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, ⁵to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. ⁶And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. ⁷And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

Hymn: "O Little Town of Bethlehem" (v. 1, 3)

1 O little town of Bethlehem,
how still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep
the silent stars go by;
yet in thy dark streets shineth
the everlasting light.
The hopes and fears of all the years
are met in thee tonight.

3 How silently, how silently
the wondrous gift is giv'n!
So God imparts to human hearts
the blessings of his heav'n.
No ear may hear his coming;
but, in this world of sin,
where meek souls will receive him, still
the dear Christ enters in.

Gospel Reading, continued: Luke 2:8–14

⁸ And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹ And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with fear. ¹⁰ And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy that will be for all the people. ¹¹ For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. ¹² And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths 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,
and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"

Hymn: "Angels, from the Realms of Glory" (v. 1-2, 4)

1 Angels, from the realms of glory,
wing your flight o'er all the earth;
once you sang creation's story,
now proclaim Messiah's birth:
Come and worship, come and worship,
worship Christ, the newborn king.

2 Shepherds, in the fields abiding,
watching o'er your flocks by night,
God with us is now residing,
yonder shines the infant light.
Come and worship, come and worship,
worship Christ, the newborn king.

4 All creation, join in praising
God, the Father, Spirit, Son,
evermore your voices raising
to the eternal Three in One.
Come and worship, come and worship,
worship Christ, the newborn king.

Gospel Reading, continued: Luke 2:15–20

¹⁵ When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.” ¹⁶ And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger. ¹⁷ And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. ¹⁸ And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. ¹⁹ But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. ²⁰ And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

L: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: **Thanks be to God.**

Special Music: “Rise Up Shepherds & Follow”

Saxophone Quartet

Sermon

Hymn of the Day: “From Heaven Above” (v. 1-2, 14)

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 From heav’n above to earth I come
to bring good news to ev’ryone!
Glad tidings of great joy I bring
to all the world, and gladly sing: | 2 To you this night is born a child
of Mary, chosen virgin mild;
this newborn child of lowly birth
shall be the joy of all the earth. |
|---|--|

14 “Glory to God in highest heav’n,
who unto us his Son has giv’n.”
With angels sing in pious mirth:
a glad new year to all the earth!

We Respond

A Christmas Creed

I believe in Jesus Christ and in the beauty of the gospel begun in Bethlehem.

I believe in the one whose spirit glorified a little town; and whose spirit still brings music to persons all over the world, in towns both large and small.

I believe in the one for whom the crowded inn could find no room, and I confess that my heart still sometimes wants to exclude Christ from my life today.

I believe in the one who the rulers of the earth ignored and the proud could never understand; whose life was among common people, whose welcome came from persons of hungry hearts.

I believe in the one who proclaimed the love of God to be invincible:

I believe in the one whose cradle was a mother's arms, whose modest home in Nazareth had love for its only wealth, who looked at persons and made them see what God's love saw in them, who by love brought sinners back to purity, and lifted human weakness up to meet the strength of God.

**I confess my ever-lasting need of God: The need of forgiveness for our selfishness and greed, the need of new life for empty souls, the need of love for hearts grown cold.
I believe in God who gives us the best of himself.**

I believe in Jesus, the son of the living God, born in Bethlehem this night, for me and for the world.

Prayers of Intercession

A: Let us pray for the church and the world which God so loved that He gave His only begotten son so that whoever believes in Him may have eternal life.

Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Prince of Peace, in the fullness of time you became one of us and your wisdom from on high came down to make a home among us. On this holy night, establish and uphold our world with your justice and righteousness so that your peace and good will may be known among all nations. Lord, in your mercy,

C: hear our prayer.

A: Light of the World, on the night of your birth you hallowed all time and all flesh. On this holy night, expand the vision of this faith community and of your whole church on earth to recognize and welcome your holy face in every human being, and to acknowledge your sacred fingerprint on every living thing. Lord, in your mercy,

C: hear our prayer.

A: God with us, you were born in a stable and suffered death on a cross. Be with those who suffer now; heal the sick, console the mourning, rescue the poor, find the lost, comfort the lonely. As you led the wise men by a star to the manger, lead us to share our gifts with those in need so that we might honor our Lord Jesus Christ. Lord, in your mercy,

C: hear our prayer.

A: Word of Life, in every time and place the voices of saints and angels together proclaim the good news of great joy which is for all people. Thank you for those saints most dear

to us who in this last year have followed into eternal life, our Lord Jesus Christ, firstborn from the dead. Thank you for trusting us with the Gospel and choosing us, like Mary, to carry your Son into the world. Blend our voices with angels and the saints on earth and in heaven, and at the last day assemble us all around your heavenly throne to forever sing a joyful song to you. Lord, in your mercy,

C: hear our prayer.

P: Come down to us, O God, and make your home with us, in us, and through us, for the sake of the one whose birth the angels sang and the shepherds proclaimed, Jesus Christ our Savior.

C: Amen.

The Peace

P: The peace of the Lord be with you always.

C: And also with you.

Invitation to Offering

Offertory: "God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen"

Saxophone Quartet

Offering Prayer

A: 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 a 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.

C: Amen.

The Meal

The Great Thanksgiving

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

P: Lift up your hearts.

C: We lift them to the Lord.

P: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

C: It is right to give our thanks and praise.

P: 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.

The Lord's Prayer

**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

P: Rejoice! Emmanuel is come to you. Share in the feast of salvation.

The Body of Christ, broken for you.

The Blood of Christ, shed for you.

All eat bread and drink wine or juice at their seat.

Table Blessing

P: The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in his grace.

C: Amen.

Prayer after Communion

A: God with us, for us and for our salvation, you came down from heaven, were incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary and became truly human. As you did for the shepherds, come and make your presence known among all peoples of the earth. Send us forth to proclaim this good news of great joy to all, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

C: **Amen.**

Candle Lighting

Special Music: "O Holy Night"

Saxophone Quartet

As we light our candles, please assist children and tip your unlit wick into the flame to avoid dripping wax.

Closing Hymn: "Silent Night, Holy Night"

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 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. | 2 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! |
| 3 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. | |

Sending

Blessing

P: May the Word that Mary brought to birth be carried by you into the world.

C: **Amen.**

P: May the Word that Joseph cradled in his arms enfold you with love and strength.

C: **Amen.**

P: May the Word that angels proclaimed in song bring harmony and abundant life to all.

C: **Amen.**

P: And the blessing of Almighty God, the Father, the ✝ Son, and the Holy Spirit, be with you now and forever.

C: **Amen.**

Dismissal

A: Go in peace. Christ is with you.

C: **Thanks be to God.**

Postlude: “Go Tell It on the Mountain”

Saxophone Quartet

Worship Leaders

The Rev. Emily Beckering, Pastor

Kris Keith, Music Director

Kate Wollenburg, Organist

Nancy Erbeck, Assisting Minister

John Cathcart, Reader

Saxophone Quartet

Kris Keith, Soprano Saxophone

Ben Walkenhauer, Alto Saxophone

Dave Sharkey, Tenor Saxophone

Bill Burns, Baritone Saxophone

Copyright Notices

“Infant Holy, Infant Lowly” Arr. © 1978 Lutheran Book of Worship, admin. Augsburg Fortress.

“From Heaven Above” Text © 1978 Lutheran Book of Worship, admin. Augsburg Fortress.

Thank you for worshiping with us today.

To give your offering through our website, please visit stpaulreading.org/online-giving/

About St. Paul

Most of our usual activities are currently meeting via Zoom, exercising special safety precautions, or waiting until a COVID vaccine is widely available before re-suming meetings. Please see the calendar on our website at stpaulreading.org/news-and-events/events-calendar/ for a current schedule of events.

Worship & Education: Grow in Faith!

- Sunday Worship 10:30 am
- Sunday School & Adult Forum
- Christmas Eve Candlelight Service
- Weddings & Vow Renewal
- Tuesday Morning Bible Study Weekly
- Special Topics Bible Study Series Throughout the Year

Ministries: Serve!

- St. Paul Players – Four plays per year
- St. Paul Choir, Children’s Choir, Orchestra & Handbell Choir
- Dorcas Circle Quilting—benefits Lutheran World Relief
- Monthly Community Breakfast
- Operation Christmas Child
- Valley Interfaith Community Resource Center
- Tender Mercies (housing & services for adults with mental illnesses)
- Nursing home visits and greeting cards
- Matthew 25 Ministries

Social Activities: Connect!

- OWLS Senior Group activities
- Teen Group activities
- In-House Dinner Theater Performances
- Community Easter Egg Hunt
- Easter Breakfast
- Ice Cream Social & Games
- Fall Festival with Food, Games, & Costumes
- Live Outdoor Christmas Nativity

Find Us On Social Media

Facebook: @stpaulcincinnati

YouTube: Search for “St Paul Lutheran Church, Reading”

Instagram: @stpaulreadingoh

Website: stpaulreading.org

Mission Statement: Christians using God’s gifts helping others know him.