

THE FIRST SUNDAY OF CHRISTMAS

December 28, 2025

ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH 884 Newfield Avenue, Stamford CT 06905 www.stjohnelca.org 203-322-0066

PRELUDE

We stand.

ENTRANCE CAROL

Once in Royal David's City

1 Once in royal David's city stood a lowly cattle shed, where a mother laid her baby in a manger for his bed: Mary was that mother mild, Jesus Christ, her little child.

2 He came down to earth from heaven who is God and Lord of all, and his shelter was a stable, and his cradle was a stall; with the poor and meek and lowly, lived on earth our Savior holy. 3 And our eyes at last shall see him, through his own redeeming love; for that child so dear and gentle is our Lord in heav'n above; and he leads his children on to the place where he is gone.

4 Not in that poor lowly stable, with the oxen standing by, we shall see him; but in heaven, set at God's right hand on high; there his children gather round, bright like stars, with glory crowned.

OPENING LITANY

In many and various ways God spoke of old to our ancestors through the prophets. But in these last days God has spoken to us by a Son, who he appointed to be the heir of all things, through whom he also created the world.

Rejoice in the Lord, O you righteous, and give thanks to his holy name; for to us has come a Savior, Christ, the newborn king.

Praise the Lord!

Praise the Lord from the heavens and in the heights,

Praise the Lord whose name alone is exalted, whose glory the angels sing; "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace, goodwill among all people."

PRAYER OF THE DAY

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Let us pray.

Almighty God, you have filled us with the new light of the Word who became flesh and lived among us. Let the light of our faith shine in all we do; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

We sit.

LESSONS AND CAROLS

FIRST READING

God promises a king

Isaiah 9:2-7

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. 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. 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. For all the boots of the tramping warriors and all the garments rolled in blood shall be burned as fuel for the fire. 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. 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.

CAROL

Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming

1 Lo, how a rose e'er blooming from tender stem hath sprung! Of Jesse's lineage coming as seers of old have sung, it came, a flow'r so bright, amid the cold of winter, when half-spent was the night. 2 Isaiah had foretold it, the rose I have in mind; with Mary we behold it, the virgin mother kind. To show God's love aright, she bore to us a Savior, when half-spent was the night.

Luke 1:26-35, 38

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. Therefore 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. And 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; and he shall be the one of peace.

CAROL

O Little Town of Bethlehem

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.

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.

3 How silently, how silently

4 O holy child of Bethlehem, descend to us, we pray; cast out our sin, and enter in, be born in us today.

We hear the Christmas angels the great glad tidings tell; oh, come to us, abide with us, our Lord Immanuel!

THIRD READING

The angel visits Mary

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

will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He 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. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" The 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. Then 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.

CAROL The Angel Gabriel HYMN 265

FOURTH READING

The birth of Jesus

Luke 2:1-7

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

CAROL

Away in a Manger

1 Away in a manger, no crib for a bed, the little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head. The stars in the bright sky looked down where he lay, the little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.

3 Be near me, Lord Jesus; I ask you to stay close by me forever and love me, I pray. Bless all the dear children in your tender care, and take us to heaven to live with you there.

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 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: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!" 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." So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger.

CAROL

Angels, from the Realms of Glory

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.

SIXTH READING

Jesus receives his name

Luke 2:21-35

After 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. When the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him

to the Lord (as it is written in the law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord"), and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, "a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons."

Now 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. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. Guided 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, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying, "Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel." And the child's father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. Then 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 so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul too."

CAROL

Love Has Come

1 Love has come—
a light in the darkness!
Love shines forth
in the Bethlehem skies.
See, all heaven has come to proclaim
it;
hear how their song of joy arises:
Love! Love! Born unto you, a Savior!
Love! Love! Glory to God on high.

2 Love is born!
Come, share in the wonder.
Love is God now asleep in the hay.
See the glow in the eyes of his mother;
what is the name her heart is saying?
Love! Love!
Love is the name she whispers;
Love! Love! Jesus, Immanuel.

3 Love has come and never will leave us! Love is life everlasting and free. Love is Jesus within and among us. Love is the peace our hearts are seeking. Love! Love! Love is the gift of Christmas. Love! Love! Praise to you, God on high! In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage." When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet: 'And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel." Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage."

When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

CAROL

The First Noel

1 The first Noel the angel did say was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay; in fields where they lay, keeping their sheep, on a cold winter's night that was so deep.

Refrain
Noel, Noel, Noel!
Born is the King of *Israel.

*pronounced Is-RAY-el

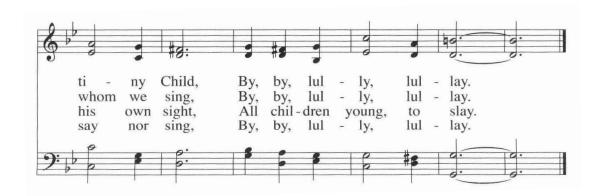
2 They looked up and saw a star shining in the east beyond them far; and to the earth it gave great light, and so it continued both day and night. (R)

5 Then entered in those wise men three, full rev'rently upon their knee, and offered there in his presence their gold, and myrrh, and frankincense. (R)

Now after they had left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him." Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt, and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, "Out of Egypt I have called my son."

When Herod saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, he was infuriated, and he sent and killed all the children in and around Bethlehem who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had learned from the wise men. Then was fulfilled what had been spoken through the prophet Jeremiah: "A voice was heard in Ramah, wailing and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be consoled, because they are no more."





We stand.

NINTH READING

The mystery of the incarnation

John 1:1-14

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people.

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God. And 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.

CAROL

O Come, All Ye Faithful

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: (R)

2. God of God,Light of Light,Lo! He abhors not the Virgin's womb;Very God, Begotten, not created: (R)

(R) 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: (R)

4. Yea, Lord, we greet thee, born this happy morning; Jesus, to thee be glory giv'n! Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing: (R)

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 the word and sacrament that we may bear your light to all the world. Amen.

PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you always. **And also with you.**

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

We sit.

OFFERING

We offer our gifts and tithes to the work of the Lord's church.

OFFERTORY SENTENCE

Walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself for us, an offering and sacrifice to God.



CAROL In the Bleak Midwinter HYMN 294

- 1 In the bleak midwinter, frosty wind made moan, earth stood hard as iron, water like a stone; snow had fallen, snow on snow, snow on snow, in the bleak midwinter, long ago.
- 3. What can I give him, poor as I am?
 If I were a shepherd
 I would bring a lamb;
 if I were a wise man
 I would do my part;
 yet what I can I give him—
 give my heart.

2 Heaven cannot hold him, nor earth sustain; heav'n and earth shall flee away when he comes to reign; in the bleak midwinter a stable place sufficed the Lord God almighty, Jesus Christ.

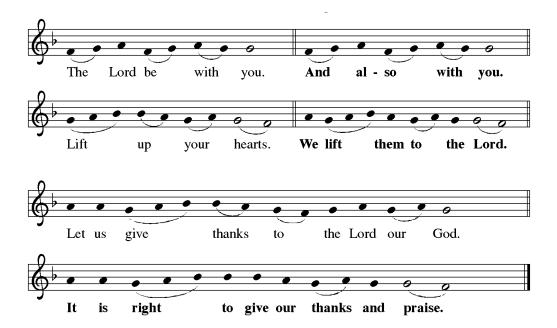
We stand.

CAROL AT THE PRESENTATION

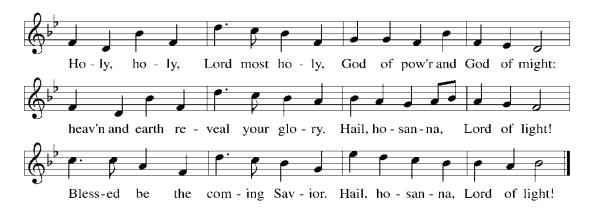
Joy to the World

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.

GREAT THANKSGIVING



It is indeed right . . . we praise your name and join their unending hymn:



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.

Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray.

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

The bread of God comes down from heaven and gives life to the world. Come, eat, and live.

Thanks be to God.

Receiving Communion

Believing that Jesus is present in the bread and wine, forgiving sins and promising eternal life, all are welcome to the Lord's table of grace. Gluten-free wafers are available.

FRACTION ANTHEM

Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us.

Therefore, let us keep the feast.

We sit.

DISTRIBUTION CAROL

Let all together praise our God

HYMN 287

We stand.

BLESSING & DISMISSAL

May you be filled with the wonder of Mary, the obedience of Joseph, the joy of 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.

Filled with the joy of Christ's birth, go in peace.

Thanks be to God!

SENDING CAROL

Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

1.Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn king; peace on earth, and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled." Joyful, all you nations, rise; join the triumph of the skies; with angelic hosts proclaim, "Christ is born in Bethlehem!"

Refrain

Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn king!"

2. Christ, by highest heav'n adored,
Christ, the everlasting Lord,
late in time behold him come,
offspring of a virgin's womb.
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see!
Hail, incarnate deity!
Pleased as man with us to dwell,

Jesus, our Emmanuel!

Refrain

Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn king!"

3 Hail the heav'n-born
Prince of peace!
Hail the Sun of righteousness!
Light and life to all he brings,
ris'n with healing in his wings.
Mild he lays his glory by,
born that we no more may die,
born to raise each child of earth,
born to give us second birth.

POSTLUDE

Worship Leaders

Officiant The Rev. Martha McCreight
Organist Cantor Nathan Lively-Greyling

Worship Assistant Cheryl Milukas Reader Jennifer Leffers Communion Assistant Jennifer Leffers

Acolytes Ushers

Altar Committee Sheila Koch

Counters J. Geils, Janet Halpin

Little Free Pantry

Financial News at St. John's

Please be generous as we close out the fiscal year so that our congregation can finish the year strong!

January 4 Epiphany Sunday Worship at 8:30 and 10:30 am | Sunday School 9:30 am After 10:30 am worship, store away Christmas decorations

January 11 Evensong 5:00 pm

February 1 Annual Meeting Single Worship service at 9:30 am

Evensong 5:00 pm