



Have a
Blessed
Christmas



Christmas Eve
SERVICE

December 24, 2022
7:00 P.M.

ZION LUTHERAN CHURCH

Stratford, Ontario

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People of Zion

Rev. Jeffrey Laustsen

Sister Jean Widmeyer

Paul Shilton

Laura Burton

Sandra Mogensen

Ministers

Pastor

Visitation Minister

Minister of Music

Organist

Pianist

Christmas Eve - 7:00 p.m.

December 24, 2022

GATHERING

Prelude

Welcome, Announcements

Call to Worship:

On this holiest of nights,

We come, joining the shepherds who are stunned by wonder.

On this most silent night,

We come, our hopes and dreams joining those of Mary and Joseph.

On this night of carols and candlelight,

We come, our glad songs joining with the choirs of angels over us.

Hymn 283: "O Come, All Ye Faithful"

Greeting

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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.

WORD

First Reading: Isaiah 9:2-7

Psalm Hymn: 267: "Joy to the World"

Second Reading: Titus 2:11-14

Gospel: Luke 2:1-20

Sermon:

<https://youtu.be/9O8THTKNz0M>

Hymn 279: "O Little Town of Bethlehem"

Prayers of Intercession

Sharing the Peace

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Choir Anthem: "On Christmas Night" Sussex Carol

arr. Ralph Vaughan Williams

MEAL

Offertory Prayer

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The Great Thanksgiving

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Communion Prayer

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The Lord's Prayer

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Distribution of Holy Communion

Post-Communion Blessing

Post-Communion Prayer

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SENDING

Blessing:

Let us go into this night, glorifying and praising God for all we have seen and heard.

May Christ be our light, this night and forevermore.

May Almighty God, Father, +Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever.

Amen.

Hymn 281: "Silent Night"

Dismissal

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Postlude

A "blessed Christmas" to all who have come to worship on this holy night. May the light and peace of Christ be with you all.

Our celebration of Christ's birth continues tomorrow as we gather at 10:00 a.m. for worship.

All people of faith and those who seek faith are welcome to receive the

Sacrament of Holy Communion. This evening, we will be distributing the Lord's Supper in a continuous fashion. Trays holding individual cups of wine are on stands at either side of Pastor Jeff for those wishing to receive wine. The ushers will invite the congregation to come forward down the centre aisle. If you wish communion but are unable to come forward, please inform the usher and Pastor Jeff will come to your pew.

Please note that masks are “no longer mandatory”; but, continuing to wear a mask is strongly recommended. Our ropes for “limited” capacity have come down; but, we do encourage “social distancing” wherever possible. “Pre-registration” for worship is no longer required.

There are so many people to **“thank”** who have contributed so much to our worship experience this evening. We thank those who made the music, those who participated in our worship service any way, those who decorated the church sanctuary, those who donated towards the purchase of Christmas flowers. All of you have blessed us richly with your gift of time and talent. **God bless you all!**

FLOWERS FOR CHRISTMAS: “Thank you” to the following donators who have contributed to the purchase of the flowers used to decorate the Sanctuary for our Christmas celebrations: *Judy Hammond; Joe & Irene West; Elfrieda Zimmermann; Ellen Wolfe & Bruce Mitchell; Robert & Bev Keutsch; Bob & Marilyn Wells; Brian & Barb Gropp; Brian & Pauline Schade; Paula McNaughton; Jean Weir; Tom & Joanne Cosstick; Wayne & Linda Faulhafer, Lynne Huras and The Quilting Ladies.*

CHRISTMAS OFFERINGS: Your special “Christmas Offerings” have been designated to support the work of the Kiwanis CJCS Basket fund and Zion's Current Fund. Thank you for your gifts.

THIS WEEK WE PRAY:

>for our members and friends with special needs: Avrey, Paul, Tom, Darlene, Jack, Alan, Phyllis, Verlie, Brian, Anne, Sharon, Bruce, Susan, Nya, Jane, Linda, Donna, Brian, Jim, Lynnette, Al, Glenn, Brock, Cathy, Katana, Brian, David and Kolby;
>for those who have no one to pray for them.

A PRAYER FOR TRUE JOY THIS CHRISTMAS

“You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.” - Psalm 16:11, ESV

Christmas is a special time that believers and nonbelievers alike enjoy! We take our children to look at lights and decorations. We gather around tables with people we love. We buy thoughtful gifts to give to our friends and family. We put forth a lot of effort to experience joy during this season.

David wrote in Psalm 16 that God's presence is where he found the fullness of joy. For the nonbeliever, the fleeting pleasures of this world are a grace that will pass away, ultimately leaving them dissatisfied and searching for more. Only when they come to know the God who made every good thing will they be satisfied and their joy becomes full.

As for believers, we enjoy these good gifts from God, knowing that they are a shadow of the glory that is to come. The path that God made known to the Psalmist and to us is the reason we truly celebrate this Christmas season. God sent His Son Jesus, who knew no sin, to become sin for us so that we could be made right with God (2 Corinthians 5:21). Jesus, also known as the Word of God, became flesh and made His dwelling among us (John 1:14). And when Jesus' time came He died the death we deserved, and the veil that separated sinners from a Holy God was torn (Matthew 27:51).

So as you seek out ways to celebrate and enjoy this season, remember that true joy, lasting joy, comes from the presence of God. Take a moment to acknowledge He is with us, and we will be with Him forever because of this miraculous birth. This is our source of true joy this Christmas.

Let's pray:

Dear Lord,

Thank you that in your presence, we experience joy to the max! Thank you for making that available to us through the birth of your Son, Jesus! His birth is the reason we seek out experiences that bring us joy during this season, even if it's only temporary joy! I pray we use this Christmas season to prompt us to acknowledge and engage with our true source of joy—your presence. Thank you for making lasting joy available to us. Thank you for every good gift! Lord let us spend time abiding in your presence, and, Lord, let us be evidence to unbelievers that you are their only hope for true, lasting joy! Let it be undeniable that we have been with you, and thank you for being with us! In Jesus' name, Amen.