



GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

OF SOUTH BURNABY, BC

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN CANADA

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Christmas Eve Candlelight Service December 24, 2025

In winter's deepest night, we welcome the light of the Christ child. Isaiah declares that the light of the long-promised king will illumine the world and bring endless peace and justice. Paul reminds us that the grace of God through Jesus Christ brings salvation to all people. The angels declare that Jesus' birth is good and joyful news for everyone, including lowly shepherds. Filled with the light that shines in our lives, we go forth to share the light of Christ with the whole world.

We at Grace Lutheran Church strive to reflect and proclaim the love of God shown to us by Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit by providing an inclusive and supportive environment through loving care and community service.

A warm welcome to all who are worshipping with us in person or online! We appreciate your contribution to the community today: with your voice, your presence, and just the blessing that you are. May you be nurtured by God's Word, empowered by the love of Christ, and stirred by the wisdom of the Holy Spirit in this service this day, for the sake of God's mission in the world.

Grace Lutheran Church worships, prays, and serves on the traditional and unceded lands and territories of the hə́nqə́míhə́m̓ (Musqueam) and Sk̓w̓x̓wú7mesh (Squamish) speaking peoples.

GATHERING

CHRISTMAS DIALOG

Jesus Christ is the Light of the world!

He is the Light no darkness can overcome.

At darkest night we gather to celebrate the great light of our salvation.

With all the angels and the whole church we sing glory to God.

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

In him is life, and the life is the light of all people.

GATHERING SONG: Oh, Come, All Ye Faithful (#283)

GREETING

The grace revealed in the birth of Christ, the love of God made incarnate, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit that brings us together to witness a miracle, be with you all.

And also with you.

CANTICLE OF PRAISE: Hark! The Herald Angels Sing (#270)

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Almighty God, you made this holy night shine with the brightness of the true Light, your unchanging Word, your very self incarnate in Jesus Christ born unto us. Grant that we might walk in the light of Christ's presence, representing hope, peace, joy, and love for all people, pointing to the brightness of his glory, Jesus 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

A reading from Isaiah.

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!

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 exultation;
 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 Great will be his authority,
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.

PSALM: My Soul Proclaims Your Greatness (#251)

SECOND READING: Titus 2:11-14

A reading from Titus.

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.

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: What Child Is This (# 296)

GOSPEL: Luke 2:1-20

The holy gospel according to Luke.

Glory to you, O Lord.

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.

¹ In those days a decree went out from Caesar 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 in the guest room.

⁸ Now in that same 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 and 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, just as it had been told them.

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

Loving God, by the gift of your Spirit, teach us to treasure your Word and ponder it in our hearts, that we might see and hear you in all areas of our lives, through Jesus Christ, your Word made flesh. Amen.

You know, like many people, Christmas is one of my favourite times of the year. One out of around 40 or 50 favourite times, but still. I look forward to it every year. The atmosphere it brings, the expectation and anticipation of the magic, even the music can really get me going. You know, if I can get the lyrics right, at least.

But I'll be darned if something doesn't happen every year that seems to ruin it all.

Maybe it's an injury or illness of some kind. Perhaps it's some sort of brokenness or pain. Or something that comes that leaves general bad feelings. But even though for me, it's something pretty much every year, it always still surprises me.

Like, a week ago I was doing pretty good. I was ahead in my preparing, I had this whole Christmas week plotted out, and I had all my plans were in place ready to be executed. I was feeling on top of things and was thinking that finally, I can enjoy a Christmas with minimal worry and stress. Or so I thought.

I guess I got a bit too cocky because of course, something happened. Our kitchen sink stopped draining water. No problem, I thought, the internet is full of DIY instructions and stuff, I'm sure I can clear this on my own. I was told repeatedly by an unnamed spouse to just call a plumber, but I'm stubborn and once I get it in my head that I can do it myself, I obsess over it and keep at

it until it's done. And not to mention I knew I could get a killer sermon illustration out of it. Well, an illustration, anyway.

Well, after several long hours that I honestly didn't have to spare stretched over the next few days, a couple hundred dollars in tools that I really didn't need, and a bit of soreness in my back and shoulders and some near blisters on my hands, it's still clogged. Of course, during Christmas week.

And you might be thinking, "That's what ruined your Christmas? Get some real problems, buddy." And you wouldn't be wrong. This really isn't that big a deal if you think about it. It could have been solved already if I spent that time and money on hiring a professional instead of trying to fix it myself. In this particular situation, I was my own demise, and I might have many of you rolling your eyes in my general direction for yet again, biting off more than I can chew.

But the point isn't how I reacted and very foolishly thought I could solve it on my own. No, the point is that despite our best laid plans, life can trip us up. And even if it's something minor to the eyes of the majority of people with half a brain, to someone who can be as obsessed as I can be in wanting to get something done a certain way, it can throw a real wrench in those plans. I didn't cry or anything, but if I was being totally honest and open with you all, I did get close, especially when my brand new 25 foot sink auger maxed out and I still couldn't feel the clog...

I mean I was actually excited to fix this myself. I was looking forward to having these new tools that I probably won't ever use again. I was a little giddy with anticipation in saving a few bucks and learning a new skill and patting myself on the back for a job well done.

But that didn't happen. Instead, I was left disappointed in myself. I was feeling a little deflated that I couldn't do what I set out to do. I was kind of down, thinking that I messed up again. And during the worst time of year possible to do so.

Again, this sounds like a really minor thing, but I'm pretty sure you all could understand the feelings I was feeling. I'm sure you all could relate to that disappointment, perhaps not around something like this specifically, but in general. I'm sure you've all felt deflated like I did, when my best efforts amounted to nothing. I'm sure you've all felt down about your situations, your decisions, and what might have ended up as failures.

I often wonder if this is what Mary and Joseph felt throughout their whole Christmas story experience that we read about every year around this time for reasons unbeknownst to me. I wonder if they too, felt disappointed in the surprise pregnancy, deflated because this unexpected census made them travel during the worst time and trimester, and a little down that they didn't plan ahead enough to make hotel reservations.

I mean that is a lot of surprises, a lot of unexpectedness, a lot of poor planning. And depending on the kind of person you are, these things can really hit hard. And for someone like underaged and unwed but very pregnant Mary? I can see that being soul-crushing.

But in spite of it, her child was born. In the midst of the hectic busyness, love was found. In the thick of all the unwanted and unneeded stress, God was so very clearly with her and her growing family.

You know, I wish there was a Hallmark movie ending for my plumbing woes. I wish I could say that in the eleventh hour of plunging, augering, and quiet under-the-breath cursing because kids were present, that I heard the angelic gurgle in the pipes as the water started to flow freely. I wish I could tie this episode with a nice, neat bow and present it as the perfect illustration for the perfect sermon that will make this Christmas Eve service perfect.

But as life teaches us again and again and again, “perfection” is but a pipe dream.

Life can be really tough, in its unexpected surprises and plot twists. Life can be super disappointing, in its many dashed dreams and squashed hopes. Life can get so very messy, both figuratively and sometimes quite literally.

But in spite of all that, a baby is born unto us. In the midst of it all, we are reminded of how loved we are. In the thick of all that life throws at us, we can have hope in knowing that God is with us, through thick and thin, through highs and lows, through successes and failures.

We might not have a host of angels reminding us of that fact, but we have each other in this community and church, together singing songs of praise and thanksgiving for all that we are given and created to be. We might not have strange shepherds visiting us and encouraging us, but we have our relationships and encounters with others that give us hope in the good of humanity in general. We might not have a newborn baby looking up at us with eyes full of love, but we might have the comfort from a friend, the understanding from a colleague, or even the supportive smile from a stranger that tells us that no matter what, we are not alone, we aren't the only ones who have gone through what we're going through, and that we all have value and worth and are welcomed in this family of Christ.

See this is the gift of the Christmas season like the Magi gave the Christ child. This is the reason we celebrate like the shepherds and angels. This is the truth that we ponder like Mary when it was revealed to her that she was in the presence of God, that while we were sinners, while we were seeped in disappointment and discouragement, while we were stuck in our own unwanted and untimely situations... God appears. God enters our lives in tangible ways. God shows us a love that reminds us that we are not abandoned, we are not alone, and we are brought into community and relationship. God continues to hold us, heal us, and save us from any of the guilt and shame that might tell us otherwise.

So even in the toughness of life, even in the pitfalls that trip us up, even in the unexpected clogs that disrupt our plans, may we see that we are loved, welcomed, and saved by this little baby that came to us full of a grace that forgives, a peace that accepts, and a hope in the truth of a God with us.

So on this Christmas Eve, tomorrow's Christmas Day, and throughout this Christmas season and always, may we have the hope of the shepherds, the joy of the angels, the love of a mother, and the peace of a newborn baby, that the light of God might always shine brightly in and through our lives, dispelling the darkness, binding up the broken, and lifting us up in love,

allowing us to lean on this strength and be empowered to not just live life, but live the life that truly is life. All thanks and praise be to God. Amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY: Joy to the World (#267)

CREED

Together with all celebrating God's presence among us, let us confess the Christian faith with the Apostle's creed:

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.*
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

HYMN OF FAITH: Angels We Have Heard on High (#289)

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

Holy God, as the candle light increases through this place of worship, so your love increases throughout this world that has grown so accustomed to the darkness. May your love shine in us light and joy, that it be reflected onto all people. May our connection to you and each other be strengthened as you guide us toward the peace and acceptance of your presence among us. May your incarnate self always be real to us, that we might see you in everyone we meet, as siblings and joint-heirs with your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

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

¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being ⁴ in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overtake it.

⁶ There was a man sent from God whose name was John. ⁷ He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. ⁸ He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. ⁹ The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

¹⁰ He was in the world, and the world came into being through him, yet the world did not know him. ¹¹ He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. ¹² But to all

who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, ¹³ who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

¹⁴ 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.

HYMN OF LIGHT: Silent Night, Holy Night! (#281)

LORD'S PRAYER

As we bask in the light of Christ's love, let us pray as he taught us.

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.**

Give us today our daily bread.

**Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those
who sin against us.**

**Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours,
now and forever. Amen.**

SENDING

BLESSING

May the Lord God our Creator, Saviour, and Redeemer, who has called you out of the darkness into the light, grant to you the joy of the angels, the eagerness of the shepherds, and the peace of the baby born unto us, this day and always.

Amen.

SENDING HYMN: Go, Tell It on the Mountain (#290)

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, shine the light that the darkness cannot overcome.

Thanks be to God.