



GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

OF SOUTH BURNABY, BC

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN CANADA

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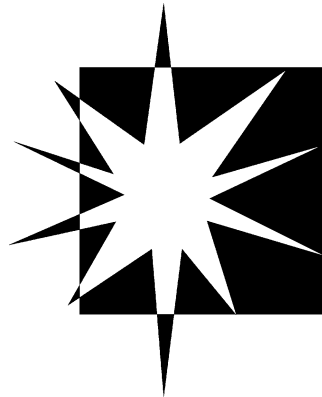
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**Christmas Day
December 25, 2025
Tree of Life**

As on the first day of creation, on this Christmas Day the Word illumines the world, shining forth to bring all things into being. Today we celebrate the incarnate Word, God becoming flesh to live among us in the person of Jesus Christ then and now. Emboldened by the good news of Christ's birth, along with the shepherds, Mary and Joseph, and all witnesses to the light of Christ, we declare to the world that we have indeed seen and been transformed by the arrival of "the salvation of our God." O come, let us adore!

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 hə́nqə́mihə́m (Musqueam) and Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) speaking peoples.

GATHERING

DIALOGUE

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.

**The light shines in the darkness,
and the darkness has not overcome it.**

Those who dwelt in the land of deep darkness,
on them light has shined.

**We have beheld Christ's glory,
glory as of the only Son from the Father.**

To us a child is born, to us a Son is given.

**In the Word was life,
and the life was the light of all people.**

GATHERING SONG: The First Noel (#300)

GREETING

The grace of the Christ child born this day, the love of God that overcomes the darkness, and the communion of the Holy Spirit that reveals all this to us, be with you all.

And also with you.

HYMN OF PRAISE: (TOL p.6)

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Wondrous and faithful God, we praise you and bless you for the gift of your Son Jesus, the true light who shines in and dispels the darkness. May all who hear this name be renewed in hope, peace, joy, and love, that all might see the redemption in your grace. We pray these things in the name of that same Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

WORD

FIRST READING: Isaiah 52:7-10

A reading from Isaiah.

Isaiah proclaims news of great joy: "Your God reigns!" Just as God saved the people from oppression in Egypt, God delivers Israel from exile. All the earth will witness the saving acts of God.

⁷ How beautiful upon the mountains
are the feet of the messenger who announces peace,
who brings good news,
who announces salvation,
who says to Zion, "Your God reigns."

⁸ Listen! Your sentinels lift up their voices;
together they shout for joy,
for in plain sight they see
the return of the LORD to Zion.

⁹ Break forth; shout together for joy,
you ruins of Jerusalem,
for the LORD has comforted his people;

he has redeemed Jerusalem.
¹⁰ The LORD has bared his holy arm
before the eyes of all the nations,
and all the ends of the earth shall see
the salvation of our God.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM: Psalm 98

- ¹ Sing a new song to the LORD, who has done marvelous things,
whose right hand and holy arm have won the victory.
- ² **O LORD, you have made known your victory,
you have revealed your righteousness in the sight of the nations.**
- ³ You remember your steadfast love and faithfulness to the house of Israel;
all the ends of the earth have seen the victory of our God.
- ⁴ **Shout with joy to the LORD, all you lands;
lift up your voice, rejoice, and sing.**
- ⁵ Sing to the LORD with the harp,
with the harp and the voice of song.
- ⁶ **With trumpets and the sound of the horn
shout with joy before the king, the LORD.**
- ⁷ Let the sea roar, and all that fills it,
the world and those who dwell therein.
- ⁸ **Let the rivers clap their hands,
and let the hills ring out with joy before the LORD, who comes to judge the earth.**
- ⁹ The LORD will judge the world with righteousness
and the peoples with equity.

SECOND READING: Hebrews 1:1-4

A reading from Hebrews.

This letter opens with a lofty declaration of Jesus' preeminent status as the Son through whom God created the world and through whom our sins are cleansed. God speaks to us now through the Son, who is exalted even above the angels.

¹ Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, ² but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds. ³ He is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, ⁴ having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION (TOL p. 10)

GOSPEL: John 1:1-14

The holy gospel according to John.

Glory to you, O Lord.

The prologue to the Gospel of John describes Jesus as the Word of God made flesh, the one who reveals God to be “full of grace and truth.”

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.

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

By the light of your Spirit, O God, may your Word illumine our hearts and minds, that we be open to your presence with and among us, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Finally, it's Christmas. Not just Christmas shopping or tree decorating. Not just some kind of a Christmas concert or production. Not Christmas Eve, as awesome as that was. But Christmas. Actual Christmas Day. And I tell ya, I've been waiting for this day for a looong time now. I mean, who doesn't love Christmas, am I right?

But sure, I know that people in general are busy enough as it is, and Christmas adds to that and becomes an extra busy time. And then if those people are parents or have bigger families that live locally, then it's extra extra busy. But then if those people are pastors, then honestly it gets extra extra extra busy. And for pastors who are also parents and have large, locally-living families? Well, that's more "extras" than we have time for today, especially during this extra x infinity busy time. But still, even with all those "extras", this time of year continues to be a favourite for so many, myself included.

But something that kind of bothers me about Christmas time, especially this year, is that... well... and I mean this in the most polite way possible, but my goodness do people care whether or not my kids still get excited for Christmas or not.

Seriously, no offense to any of you who have asked me this, but it's like the only thing people have to talk to me about these days. It's like become the opener to conversations after, "How are you." I get it, though. My kids aren't little kids anymore. And with Christmas, much like all the other very commercialised holidays, cater heavily to little kids. Or at least, works really

hard to get the kids to fall into the consumerism mentality. So losing those Christmas feels has become sort of a rite of passage, when the extra busyness of the world gets to us and sucks out the excitement, the joy, the magic of the season. And it's a shame when that happens to kids, because it's that innocence and giddiness the kids have for Christmas that helps us to stay in that space.

So don't get me wrong, I don't mind that people ask me if my kids still get excited for Christmas per se, it's just that... they don't ask me if I get excited or not. I mean, what about my feelings? What about my giddiness of the season? What about whether that magic affects me or not?

But I get that too, I guess, people would much rather talk about my kids than talk about me. And that's ok, I probably would want to talk about my kids more than myself as well. But I just wonder about how it's become "normal" to not get excited about this time of year. Or not get caught up in the festivities. Or just not... care about Christmas?

And honestly, it's not hard to really get not excited about Christmas when we get texts like these, John's version of Jesus' birth. You know, the one we just heard, the one that doesn't have any shepherds or barn animals or "no vacancy" signs at the inn, you know, all the things we've come to expect from a Christmas story. There aren't any hosts of heaven, no unexpected reception, there isn't even a baby John's telling. I mean it has images of the cosmos, but there's no star. It talks about the heavens, but there aren't any angels. And it's mystical, but there's no magic.

So this like the "mature" version. This is the "grown up" story. It's full of head knowledge, cosmic language, and theology, not exactly kid-focussed. I mean, there isn't anyone out there who is making dioramas of John chapter 1. There aren't any stuffies or action figures of words transforming into flesh. It's just hard to get excited with what looks like the introduction to a 100-level course on the foundations of the earth's formation.

So this, paired with all the stresses and busyness of life that I mentioned before, can be enough for us to get more excited for other things when we reach a certain age. Things like pay raises or vacations. New relationships or date nights for old ones. Big events like the release of the teaser trailer for the new Avengers movie that is coming out next year.

And there's nothing wrong with those things, they still are exciting and worthy to get us going a bit, especially the Avengers trailer. And I don't mean that Christmas should always be at the top of our minds all the time or even that we have to be excited about it. I just wonder and am worried if the hecticness of this season has taken too much of a toll on us. I'm concerned about whether or not the world's interpretation of today has jaded us against its significance. It just seems like life gets in the way a lot and we might lose sight of the real magic of Christmas. Or maybe, Christmas got too familiar that it has faded into the background.

"He was in the world, and the world came into being through him, yet the world did not know him."

Suddenly this hits different. I mean the whole promise of Christmas is that God is with us, among our communities, in our relationships, throughout our very lives. But I'm not sure if that truth gives us any hope anymore. I don't know if we feel led to peace. It seems like the joy has waned. And perhaps love has become reserved for only the lovable.

I'm not shaming anyone, mind you, I'm just talking about the state of the world as I've been seeing it. It's like the more the world says to itself that it doesn't need God, all I can see is how much more it needs a Saviour.

A Saviour who understands. A Saviour who knows the difficulties and distractions of life. A Saviour who is one of us.

And as you guessed it, that's what we get. The story of Christmas reminds us of how God has entered into the world to be with us, as one of us, to save us. That Jesus, the very embodiment of God's nature, comes to us, remains with us, and holds us as we go through life's struggles and stresses and reminds us of who we are and whose we are.

Essentially, all that God has done and continues to do, all that God is and continues to be, all that God has said and continues to proclaim, is incarnated in the person of Jesus. That in him we can see all that God teaches us about relationships, humility, and forgiveness. In him we can see all that God wants for us in terms of faith, service, and community. In him we can see the very face of God, shining on us blessing, loving us into salvation, and just with us in every aspect of life. Through and through.

I know, we don't always see these truth in and around our lives and community. We don't always recognise the things that are from God and because of God. We don't always see Jesus, especially in these busy times that only seem to get busier. But the promise of Christmas is that through the Holy Spirit, Jesus, God's Word made flesh, is here among us, with us, giving us hope, guiding us to peace, generating joy in our communities, and granting to all this unending and unfaltering love that lifts us up out of everything that holds us back from seeing and believing in this promise.

So where can we see Jesus? In the hope where there is no hope. In the peace found where peace seems impossible. In the joy bubbling up where joy has been lost. And in the love in this world that seems to have turned into an endless vacuum of hatred, brokenness, and sin.

Jesus is here, in this vacuum, and reminds us that throughout all of life, that we are worth it.

My friends, this is why I still get excited for Christmas. This is where the magic of Christmas remains for me. This is what Christmas is all about, reminding us of who we are, showing us God through Jesus by the power of the Spirit in our lives, and revealing to us all hope, peace, joy, and love, that is graciously declared to us as children of God.

So on this Christmas Day, throughout this Christmas season, and for the whole year and all time, may we constantly see the face of God in our lives, through the Word made flesh, by the ebbing and flowing of the Spirit in and around us, that leads us into the life that truly is life. Thanks be to God. Amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY: Of the Father's Love Begotten (#295)

APOSTLES' CREED (p.12)

Together with all praising God for the arrival of the Christ child, 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.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Led into the joy of celebrating the Christ child born unto us, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need. Each petition will end with "Lord, in your ever-present mercy," and you all may respond with **hear our prayer**. Lord, in your incarnate mercy, **hear our prayer**.

Holy God, we sing a new song to you, for you have done marvellous things in sending your Son to be with us as one of us through the birth of a child. As we gather at the manger, help us see your face in all of your people. Equip us in the nurture and care of all. Lord, in your incarnate mercy, **hear our prayer**.

Humbling God, you make yourself known to us through the life and teachings of Jesus, and we follow his example of wisdom and compassion in our work and ministry. May our lives reflect the love that you show us, that all might know of your promises of grace. We lift up in prayer our neighbouring faith communities; those who use this building for worship, work, and play; our partners Anglican Church of Canada and Moravian Church in Canada; and our bishops, rostered leaders, congregations, and ministries of the ELCIC. Lord, in your incarnate mercy, **hear our prayer**.

Creator God, you have revealed your righteousness and love through all that you have made and entrusted to us, even the rocks and streams proclaim your praise. Attune us to the joyful sounds of your creation, and stir us to tend to the earth wisely, that all the lands and seas might dwell in abundance and peace. Lord, in your incarnate mercy, **hear our prayer**.

Righteous God, in the sight of the nations, you remember us with steadfast love and faithfulness. Embolden leaders and politicians to make your justice and peace known throughout the earth. Uphold justice advocates and social service providers who risk their safety to help others. Grant us all your wisdom and compassion when dealing with others who might be different from us, that your grace be apparent and abound. We especially pray for the continued support of those that we've sponsored to come into our country: Abraham Barhane; Solyana Amanuel; Filimon Abraha; as well as for those who have not yet arrived:

Maেকেle Kiflu, Selam Haile, and their children; and Meri Gabramikael. Lord, in your incarnate mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Healing God, we clap our hands and ring out for joy for you promise to restore us to wholeness and community. Be especially with all those among us who are sick, grieving, struggling, and lonely. Especially we pray for Kathy and family; Bryan and Chona; Ron, Tess, and Mineko; Beulah; Greg; Bev and family; John and Betty; Sukhwant; Pastor Kristen; Laura; Kandie; Will; Chris; Larry; Walter; Piet; Kelly; Betty; Ngan Kew; and all those we name aloud or quietly in our hearts at this time...

Lord, in your incarnate mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Eternal God, we know that at the end, you will judge us with righteousness and equity, and we trust that your grace will abound. Give comfort to those who mourn, and assure them of the peace you have granted to those who have gone before us. Lord, in your incarnate mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Into your hands, O God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your grace and love made known to us in Jesus Christ, our Savior.

Amen.

PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you always.

And also with you.

MEAL

DIALOGUE (p. 14)

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

PREFACE

It is indeed right, our duty, and our joy, that we at all times and places give thanks and praise to you, Almighty God, for on this day you have given us your Son, Jesus Christ, to live and eventually die for us that we might know of your expansive love and grace, that we, together with the choirs of angels, the hosts of heaven, and church on earth, might forever praise your name with the unending hymn:

HOLY, HOLY, HOLY (p. 14)

THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE

Holy and Almighty God, we give you thanks and praise for all the seasons of the earth and of the church. Especially we thank you for the beauty and astonishment of this season of Christmas, in which we remember the Immanuel, God with us, the true light that the darkness cannot overcome. And you remind us of your unending love through all that you have done and continue to do: through all of creation and its beautiful splendor; through sending prophets and messengers announcing the good news of your salvation; and ultimately through sending your son Jesus, born on this day, the exact imprint of your very being, and through his

very Word all things are sustained. He lived among us, died for us, and now sits at the right hand of your majesty on high.

And on the night he was betrayed, your Son Jesus the Emmanuel sat with his friends for a meal, took the bread, gave you thanks, broke it, and gave it to them saying, "Take and eat, this is my body given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me."

Then after they ate, he took the cup, gave you thanks, and shared it with them to drink from 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."

Together we celebrate these gifts from our Saviour, and together we speak the mystery of faith:

Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

Gracious God, pour out your Holy Spirit upon us and upon this bread and cup, joining us in true communion with Christ and with all who share in this feast, in heaven and on earth. May we truly receive him, and in believing in his name we are given the power to become your children, united in ministry in every place. Through Christ, with Christ, in Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory belongs to you, O God, full of grace and truth, now and forever. **Amen.**

LORD'S PRAYER (p. 17)

Together with all of God's people, let us pray as Jesus 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.**

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Taste and see God meeting us through Christ.

Thanks be to God.

COMMUNION

COMMUNION HYMNS: Lamb of God (p. 17)

Love Has Come (#292)

It Came upon the Midnight Clear (#282)

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Holy God, you have again fed us with the bread and Word of life, nourishing us to serve you and neighbour this day and always. Be with us throughout this season and beyond, that we be forever reminded of your Word become flesh, our life and salvation, Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

SENDING**BLESSING**

May the true light of God shine on you,
the Son sent by God be your guide and strength,
the Spirit of God give you the hope and peace to live in joy and love, today and always.
Amen.

SENDING HYMN: Away in a Manger (#278)

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, shine Christ's light in the world.
Thanks be to God.

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