

Welcome to Grace Lutheran Church

To glorify God, to grow in faith,
to give in service, together in Christ

GraceLutheranHatfield.org



December 21, 2023 7 p.m.

Winter Solstice, 10:27 p.m.

Rev. Nancy M. Raabe, Pastor
Kevin Freaney, Minister of Music

For many people Christmas is a time of joy and light, but also one in which those experiencing grief and pain may struggle to find their voices. This gentle service is intended to open avenues for the Holy Spirit to move through all that we are enduring, that Christ may continue to live in your hearts through faith as we are rooted and grounded in love.

CALL TO WORSHIP

L. Tonight
the earth tilts and tips,
its axis pulling this half of the world
away from the sun.

C. This is the longest night.

L. The shadows lengthen.
The darkness lingers.
Those we love
don't always notice, but it's true:

C. This is the longest night.

L. Tonight, we bring to God
what weighs on us
in the small hours.

C. This is the longest night.

Carol: O Little Town of Bethlehem (*stanzas 1 and 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.

L. This gathering darkness
is not a threat, but a shelter,
a time to name what is true:
Sometimes joy doesn't come easily.
C. Yet God still meets us.

L. Sometimes merriness is not within
reach. **C. Yet God still meets us.**

L. Sometimes despair doesn't depart at
dawn. **C. Yet God still meets us.**

L. Come, bring your whole selves to
God. **C. God's arms are open wide.**

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.

Greeting

Prayer of the Day

L. Creator of the stars of night,
you have established your faithfulness in heaven itself.
You are still as the North Star
and steadfast as the dawn.
Reveal yourself where we least expect you:
in the longest night,
in the most difficult times,
in the sheer silence
when words fail us.
Faithful One, abide with us every moment. **Amen.**

LIGHTING THE FIRST CANDLE

L. The shadows lengthen.
C. The evening is here.
L This is the darkest night of the year.
**C. Let our faith flicker
against our incomprehension.**

The first candle is lit.

All sing:

**O come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel,
that mourns in lonely exile here until the son of God appear.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel.**

LIGHTING THE SECOND CANDLE

L. Small stars glow above.
C. We ponder the signs here today.
L. We await news of the Savior born far away.
**C. Stars whisper old light
on a night of new love.**

The second candle is lit.

All sing:

**O come, O Wisdom from on high, embracing all things far and nigh:
In strength and beauty come and stay; teach us your will and guide our way.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel.**

LIGHTING THE THIRD CANDLE

L. Candlelight leaps upward.

C. We raise our hearts to God.

L. The Spirit's wings are open broad.

C. Hover over chaos; speak your holy Word.

The third candle is lit.

All sing:

**O come thou Dayspring, come and cheer; O Sun of justice, now draw near.
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night, and death's dark shadow put to flight.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel.**

WORD

2 Corinthians 8:8-9

I do not say this as a command, but I am testing the genuineness of your love against the earnestness of others. For you know the generous act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich.

Luke 1:46-55

And Mary said,

“My soul magnifies the Lord,
and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior....”

L. Word of God, word of life.

C. Thanks be to God.

Meditation: Magnificat Now

Pastor Nancy Raabe

HYMN: Christmas Come Close



1 Christ-mas come close in a child's crump - led face, to the
2 Christ-mas come close to the place where we are, in our
3 Christ-mas come close to a world that is bleak, giv - ing
4 Christ-mas come close in - to fo - cus and frame, to hu -



rag - ged and raw in a harsh birth - ing place, in a
long - ing for peace, for a sign, for a star, for a
hope a new home, mak - ing pro - phe - cy speak: so the
man - i - ty's heart for the child to make claim: for the



surg - ing of joy, in a bun - dle held tight, in a
cer - tain - ty born in un - cer - tain - ty's space, for a
an - gels will sing, and the wise will be heard, and the
poor to be served, for the rich to kneel low, for Mag -



breath, in a cry, through the dark of the night.
mys - ter - y grasped that our blind - ness can trace.
powers will take heed of this child and his word.
ni - fi - cat now in the Christ - mas we know.

Text: Shirley Erena Murray

Setting, Nancy Raabe

TIME OF QUIET REFLECTION

Enter into God's presence in the stillness of the night in of these ways, or as you choose.

❖ Pay attention to your breath:

Inhale: "Jesus Christ, Son of God,"

Exhale: "have mercy on me, a sinner."

or

Inhale: "The Spirit intercedes for us,"

Exhale: "with sighs too deep for words."

Or:

❖ Collect your joys, sorrows, or concerns into one or two sentences. Inscribe these on the card included in the bulletin. Please hand these to the ushers as they offer a basket. They will form the substance of our prayers tonight.

To conclude this time a tone will sound.

L. May God bless you with the healing power of the Holy Spirit,
release you from suffering, and restore you to wholeness and strength.



LIGHTING THE FOURTH CANDLE

L. In quiet dimness,

C. Heartbeats keep time.

L. In deepening vigil, we wait for a sign.

C. Jesus, end our waiting. Come into our midst.

The fourth candle is lit.

All sing:

**O come, O King of nations, come, O Cornerstone that binds in one:
Refresh the hearts that long for you; restore the broken, make us new.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel.**

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

*To the petition “Lord, hear our prayer,” please respond,
“And in your merciful love, answer.”*

LORD’S PRAYER

BLESSING

L. The blessing of Almighty God, † the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be upon you and remain with you forever.

*For those with wax candles, please tip yours into the flame being offered.
For those with electric candles, please light yours as your row is lit.*

HYMN: Silent Night, Holy Night!

ELW 281

- 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.



DISMISSAL

L. Go in peace. Let Christ's light shine through you. **C. Thanks be to God.**

Please extinguish your candles as you depart. A blessed and peaceful Christmas to all!

Serving tonight:

Leader and cantor, Pastor Nancy Raabe
Minister of Music, Kevin Freaney
Usher: Lisa Boyer Acolyte: Jaime Kaler



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COMING UP at GRACE:

December 24, morning (Advent 4): One morning service at 9:15 a.m.

December 24, evening (Christmas Eve): 4:00, 9:00, and 11:00 p.m.

December 25: No service.

December 31: One service at 9:15 a.m. (carol sing)