

# SERVICE OF LESSONS AND CAROLS

4TH SUNDAY IN ADVENT

December 19th, 2021



## CHRIST LUTHERAN CHURCH

140 Russell Avenue  
St. Catharines, Ontario L2R 1W1  
Church: 905-685-8294 Fax 905-685-7661

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**Office Hours:** Tuesday to Friday—9 a.m. – 12 noon  
**Bulletin Announcements:** Please send to [secretary@christlutheransc.ca](mailto:secretary@christlutheransc.ca).  
Deadline for submission is Thursday at 9 a.m.

**Pastor:** Pastor Todd Hoeffs (289-362-0113) [pastortoddhoeffs@gmail.com](mailto:pastortoddhoeffs@gmail.com)  
**Parish Assistant:** Louise Gondosch (905-329-8579) [parish.assistant@christlutheransc.ca](mailto:parish.assistant@christlutheransc.ca)  
**Business Manager:** Karen McCumber [business.manager@christlutheransc.ca](mailto:business.manager@christlutheransc.ca)  
**Secretary:** Pat Kimpel [secretary@christlutheransc.ca](mailto:secretary@christlutheransc.ca)  
**Facebook:** Lisa Gall [www.facebook.com/ChristLutheranChurchSC](http://www.facebook.com/ChristLutheranChurchSC)  
**Bulletin by email:** Judy Mason [chairman.outreach@christlutheransc.ca](mailto:chairman.outreach@christlutheransc.ca)

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**Prayer:** Stir up Your power, O Lord, and come among us with great might; and because we are sorely hindered by our sins, let Your bountiful grace and mercy speedily help and deliver us; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

**Organist:** Louise Gondosch  
**Readers:** 9 a.m. — Paul Mason 11 a.m. – Paul Wachs

**Children’s Message: “Love”** – [https://youtu.be/NMY\\_WhxwZPc](https://youtu.be/NMY_WhxwZPc)

**DAILY SCRIPTURE MEDITATIONS:**

Monday: Isa. 45: 1-8 Wed.: Mark 3: 31-35 Friday: John 19: 25b-27  
Tuesday: 1 Cor. 2: 6-10 Thurs: Rom. 1: 1-7 Saturday: Rom. 5: 21-25

**WORSHIP NOTE:**

- A recording of Sunday’s service will be uploaded to YouTube – “Gathering the Scattered” at: (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC3a4p6prdJGEyP5S-q-cNSg>).
- A PDF version of the order of service for each Sunday will also be posted on our church website: [christlutheransc.ca](http://christlutheransc.ca).
- Archived videos of Sunday’s service will be uploaded to christlutheransc.ca – “Worship” page.

Any questions or concerns, please check out our church website (<http://christlutheransc.ca/>), contact Judy Slingerland ([chairman.worship@christlutheransc.ca](mailto:chairman.worship@christlutheransc.ca)) or Pastor Todd ([pastortoddhoeffs@gmail.com](mailto:pastortoddhoeffs@gmail.com)). or phone the church office. May the peace of the risen Lord be with you all.

**EDUCATION HOUR** will not meet between the services in December. It will resume in late January for Sunday school and Bible Study. Youth Catechism will resume in February and March 2022. More information still to come.

**ADVENT & CHRISTMAS 2021 WORSHIP**



- SUNDAY, DECEMBER 19 – 9 & 11 AM: – Lessons & Carols Service
- FRIDAY, DECEMBER 24 – CHRISTMAS EVE –  
7 PM: Christmas Carol Candlelight Service  
10 PM: Christmas Carol Candlelight Service
- SATURDAY, DECEMBER 25 – CHRISTMAS DAY–  
10 AM: Christmas Carol Communion Worship
- SUNDAY, DECEMBER 26 – BOXING DAY –  
10 AM: Christmas Carol Communion Worship  
(no Education Hour this morning)
- SUNDAY, JANUARY 2ND, 2022 –  
10 AM: Epiphany Blended Worship  
(no Education Hour this morning)

***Please feel WELCOME to join us for any / or all of these Special Advent and Christmas Services!!***



**CHRISTMAS EVE CANDLELIGHT SERVICES**

in order to ensure that we can accommodate everyone we would ask that those attending please pre-register by:

- Registering on the sign-up sheets in the narthex
- calling the Church office at 905-685-8294
- by email at: [secretary@christlutheransc.ca](mailto:secretary@christlutheransc.ca)

**the sign-up sheets in the narthex or by calling Pat at 905-685-8294 or emailing [secretary@christlutheransc.ca](mailto:secretary@christlutheransc.ca)**

**OUR DEEPEST CONDOLENCES:** To the family of **JULIE WHITTARD** who entered into eternal rest on Sunday, December 12, 2021, surrounded by the love of her family. A memorial was held Friday, December 17, 2021. We hold in prayer Julie's husband, Dave, their children, her siblings, grandchildren, nieces, nephews and many friends in and out of church. May the Lord bless them and keep them in peace and hope of the joyful reunion we all have in Jesus Christ.

**YOUTH CAROLING at LUTHER MANOR: TODAY at 3:00 p.m.**

We hope to be able to spread some Christmas cheer and enjoy an afternoon together. Friends, parents and others are welcome to join in on the fun and spreading of Christmas joy!

**LOOKING AHEAD:** **The Christmas Tree and decorations take down** will be held on **Saturday, January 8<sup>th</sup> at 4 p.m.** The supper will be held at 6 p.m. at Northern Flame Grill, 312 Lake Street. Menu and further details to follow. A sign-up sheet is at the back of the church for those who wish to attend. *(please indicate if you will be attending supper)*

**LUTHERAN CHURCH - CANADA NATIONAL YOUTH GATHERING:**

Lutheran Young people from across Canada will be gathering together this **July 15-19, 2022** in Winnipeg, Manitoba. The theme for the gathering is **"IN NOT OF"** from Philippians 3:20 "But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Saviour, The Lord Jesus Christ." Information packages are available from Louise. Save the date, check out the website at <http://www.lccnyg.ca>, start following the Facebook and Instagram pages and check out this fun announcement from Pastor Glenn Worcester <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=68qXVYofMYY> .

**ADVENT ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN:** During this season of Advent, to help families prepare for 'Jesus Birth', children are encouraged to pick up an "Advent Paper Chain" as a countdown to Christmas and an "Activity Book" from the narthex. Books are for children 3-6 years or 7-9 years.

**Right Now Media** resources at [www.rightnowmedia.org](http://www.rightnowmedia.org).

- Children's videos such as "The Story of Christmas", a 25 minute video that helps children laugh, wonder, and rejoice as they learn of God's love for the world in the gift of baby Jesus.
- Confirmants will find a Playmobil animation video on Martin Luther
- Sports enthusiasts will receive encouragement from Christian athletes such as Tim Tebow.

There are hundreds of other Videos and Bible Studies for children, youth and adults by presenters such as Francis Chan, John Piper, Kyle Idleman, Jeanie Allen, Max Lucado, Bianca Juarez Olthoff and many others. If you need login assistance contact Louise.

**Last Sunday Attendance: Dec. 12<sup>th</sup>, 2021 Attn: 9 a.m. – 52; 11 a.m. — 50; Total: 102**

	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Weekly Need</u>	<u>Last Sunday</u>	<u>Year To Date</u>	<u>+ or - (--)</u>
Current:	271,175.00	5,214.90	3,006.00	192,720.34	(68,024.98)
LCC Missions	20,000.00	384.62	290.00	16,939.00	(2,291.77)
Property Improvement:			44.00	5,730.50	

**2022 DONATION ENVELOPES** are available for pick up in your mailbox. If you don't have a mailbox, please check the table at the entrance to the sanctuary. If you have not been issued envelopes and would like some, or, you would like to be assigned a mailbox, please contact Karen at: [business.manager@christlutheransc.ca](mailto:business.manager@christlutheransc.ca) or the office at 905-685-8294.

**FLOWERS** have been placed on the altar this morning to the glory of God by Naomi Hohnberg in loving memory of her mother, Doris Hohnberg.



**CHRISTMAS POINSETTIAS:** will be available to take home after the service on Christmas Day at a cost of \$10 each. Please sign up in the Narthex. We will again list the flowers as a “memorial or in thankfulness for” in the bulletin on Dec. 26<sup>th</sup>.ch.

**HAPPY BIRTHDAY** to Pauline Honey who turned 96 on December 13<sup>th</sup>, from her family and friends. May God bless her on this big milestone and keep her safe.

**A MEMORIAL DONATION** has been given to the Haiti Lutheran Missions Society Mixte Nazareth Feeding Program in memory of Erna McBride by Peter & Elvira Zernikel.

**THANK YOU** to all who donated items and those who bid on items for the Silent Auction. The final tally is \$1,391.00!!!

**SUPPORTING YOUR CHURCH DURING THE PANDEMIC:** It's important for members to keep in mind that expenses for payroll, utilities, maintenance, etc. continue to accumulate even when you are not comfortable attending service.

**1. THROUGH EFT DONATIONS:** Lutheran Church - Canada, East District Corporation continues to facilitate this service for us. To assist you in continuing your financial support to your church, we encourage you to fill out the form that is available for printing at: [http://christlutheransc.ca/?page\\_id=96](http://christlutheransc.ca/?page_id=96) and then mail the form along with a voided cheque to:

Lutheran Church - Canada, East District Corporation,  
275 Lawrence Ave., Kitchener, ON N2M 1Y3,  
Attn: Darryl Holland

**2. BY MAIL:** cheques can still be mailed to:

Christ Lutheran Church,  
140 Russell Ave. St. Catharines, ON L2R 1W1

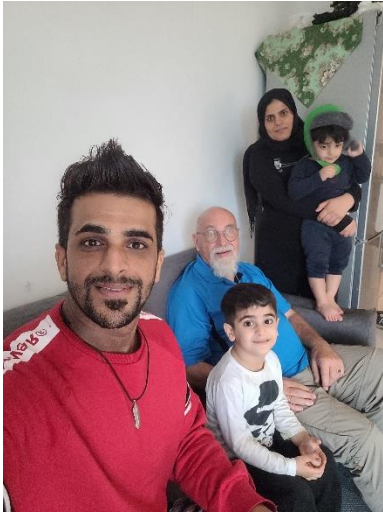
or dropped in the Church mailbox at the East entrance.

**3. ONLINE VIA LUTHERAN CHURCH-CANADA:** Lutheran Church-Canada has opened a web portal that allows parishioners to donate directly to their home church:

<https://lutheranchurch-canada.tng-secure.com/?pageId=donation-edit&categoryId=10972>

select "St. Catharines-Christ Lutheran-30950" from the drop down menu, enter the amount of your donations and LCC will transfer your donation to Christ. Donation is via VISA or Mastercard. Tax receipts will be issued by LCC (not Christ). This opportunity will be in effect until the COVID-19 emergency is over.





## **Kareem and Family**

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, as I write this note of update it is exactly one year ago today that we were notified of the Approval of Sponsorship for AL HUMAIDI, Kareem Abadi and given a G application number from Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada. We all had high hopes that the process would only take one year. However, Covid effected it as everything in our community and world-wide. I contacted my MPP Vance Badawey after returning from my trip to Athens to visit Kareem and his family. Unfortunately, the Immigration and Refugee ministry had to lend employees to Canada Revenue Agency to pay out all the CERB money. It has just been this fall that the refugee ministry is starting to process applications, and of course the whole Afghan situation has complicated the process even further. I checked online and found that Kareem's file was still on hold waiting to be processed. I am in contact with Kareem and his family on a regular basis and we video call from time to time. It was just last December 24, 2020 that the family was moved to

the apartment building in Athens. Three families are living in a 3 bedroom apartment. There is a possibility that the family may have to move again. I would ask that you keep them in prayer that they would be able to remain where they are at present. We thank God for keeping them safe and in a clean apartment this past year. Ameer turned 4 on November 15<sup>th</sup>, and Asser will turn 2 on January 9, 2022. At the present time there is a balance of \$17,334.03 in the Refugee Settlement Fund, there were a few disbursements last year for translation services. When I preached at Clarington Lutheran Church in Bowmanville on November 21<sup>st</sup>, and told them about Kareem and his family there was interest in contributing towards our Refugee Fund. This is all the news I have to date. Please continue to pray for Kareem, Hamida, Ameer, and Asser, that despite the Refugee Ministry being overwhelmed that some how they will process the application for Kareem and his family before another year goes by. Just as we waited for an answer to our prayers for bringing us Pastor Todd, we pray in God's good timing he will bring Kareem and his family here for us to reach out to them with God's amazing grace and love.

***God bless, and Merry Christmas, Pastor John and your Refugee Committee***



## OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHEER

To share the joy of Christmas with those in our community who are less fortunate than we are, the "Outreach Committee" is planning to distribute, complete Christmas turkey dinner packages. We are asking

for confidential referrals from our members. Last year we helped 25 families by making up 25 baskets.

### **We need your help by:**

- Providing us with confidential referrals which can be placed into a box located in our church narthex
- Donating the funds required for the purchase of perishable and non-perishable food items which will be purchased just before the packages are distributed
- Letting the Outreach Committee,  
Judy Mason—905-641-7546  
Howard Bogusat—905-468-3566  
know if you would be willing to help package baskets
- Praying that this project is a success and that those who receive these gifts are touched by the joy and wonder of our Saviour's birth and by His love for each one of us.

*(PLEASE NOTE THAT WE ARE COLLECTING "MONETARY DONATIONS" ONLY FOR THIS PROJECT)*

THANK YOU!

# SERVICE OF LESSONS AND CAROLS

## The 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Advent

December 19, 2021 – 9 AM and 11 AM Services

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OPENING HYMN:

“Once In Royal David’s City”

Latin & English Carol

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 mean and lowly  
lived on earth our Saviour holy.
5. And our eyes at last shall see him,  
through his own redeeming love,  
for that child so dear and gentle  
is our Lord in heaven above;  
and he leads his children on  
to the place where he is gone.

*Cecil Alexander, 1848, public domain*

INVOCATION & SCRIPTURE RESPONSES:

In the name of the Father and of the Son + and of the Holy Spirit.

**Amen.**

RESPONSIVES, PRAYER & LIGHTING OF ADVENT WREATH

O King of the nations, the ruler they long for, the cornerstone uniting all people:

**Come and save us all, whom you formed out of clay.**

O Emmanuel, our King and our Lawgiver, the anointed of the nations and their Saviour:

**Come and save us, O Lord our God.**

Let us pray: **We praise you, O God, for this wheel of time that marks our days of preparation for Christ's advent. As we light the candles on this wreath, open our eyes to see your presence in the lowly ones of this earth. Enlighten us with your grace that we may sing of your advent among us in the Word made flesh. Grant this through Christ our Lord, whose coming is certain and whose day draws near.**

**Amen.**

### ADVENT WREATH HYMN VERSE

Ho-san na we sing, with wis-dom we bring, good-will for all; With

peace co-ver earth, and hope's new birth; good will for all.

*Words: Unknown, 1967; Music: SHALOM, CHAVERIM Jewish melody, 1944*

**Scripture Lesson One:                   *Genesis 3: 8-15***

They heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man, and said to him, 'Where are you?' He said, 'I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.' He said, 'Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?' The man said, 'The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit from the tree, and I ate.' Then the Lord God said to the woman, 'What is this that you have done?' The woman said, 'The serpent tricked me, and I ate.' The Lord God said to the serpent, 'Because you have done this, cursed are you among all animals and among all wild creatures; upon your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will strike your head, and you will strike his heel.' This is the Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

**God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen**

God rest ye merry gentlemen  
Let nothing you dismay  
Remember Christ our Savior  
Was born on Christmas Day  
To save us all from Satan's pow'r  
When we were gone astray  
Oh tidings of comfort and joy  
Comfort and joy  
Oh tidings of comfort and joy

In Bethlehem, in Israel  
This blessed Babe was born  
And laid within a manger  
Upon this blessed morn  
The which His Mother Mary  
Did nothing take in scorn  
Oh tidings of comfort and joy  
Comfort and joy  
Oh tidings of comfort and joy

**Scripture Lesson Two:                   *Genesis 22: 15-18***

The angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time from heaven, and said, "By myself I have sworn, says the Lord: Because you have done this, and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will indeed bless you, and I will make your offspring as numerous as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of their enemies, and by your offspring shall all the nations of the earth gain blessing for themselves, because you have obeyed my voice."

This is the Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

CAROL:

*“Saviour Of the Nations”*

*Latin carol*

**Saviour of the Nations, come, Virgin's Son, make here Your home!  
Marvel Heaven, wonder earth, that our Lord chose such a birth.**

**Here a maid was found with child, yet remained a virgin mild,  
In her womb this truth was shown: God was there upon His throne!**

**Then stepped forth the Lord of all from His pure and kingly hall;  
God of God, yet fully man, His heroic course began.**

**From the manger newborn light shines in glory through the night.  
Darkness there no more resides; in this light faith now abides.**

*Ambrose of Milan, 340-397 AD, public domain*

**Scripture Lesson Three: *Isaiah 11:1-4, 6-9***

A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. His delight shall be in the fear of the Lord. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide by what his ears hear; but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked....The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze, their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den. They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain; for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. This is the Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

CAROL:

*“Behold A Branch Is Growing”*

*German Carol*

- 1. Behold a branch is growing of loveliest form and grace,  
As prophets sung, foreknowing; It springs from Jesse's race  
And bears one little Flower In midst of coldest winter.  
At deepest midnight hour.**
- 2. Isaiah hath foretold It In words of promise sure,  
And Mary' s arms enfold It, A virgin meek and pure.  
Through God's eternal will; This Child to her is given  
At midnight calm and still.**
- 3. This Flower, whose fragrance tender With sweetness fills the air,  
Dispels with glorious splendor The darkness everywhere.  
True Man, yet very God; From sin and death He saves us  
And lightens every load.**

*Harriet Krauth trans [1518 German hymn], 1868, public domain*

**Scripture Lesson Four: *Micah 5:2-4***

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 labour 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. This is the Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**



## CHOIR ANTHEM: – “*Prophets Knew*”

O come, O come, Em-man---u-el, and ransom captive Is----ra-el!  
Prophets knew long ago that Christ would come to earth.  
Led by Isaiah they foretold His birth.  
God in human frame, Emmanuel His name.  
Prophets knew long ago, long ago.  
Prophets knew long ago this Child would be the King!  
“Glory to God!” Let heav’n and nature sing.  
God in human frame, Messiah was His name.  
Prophets knew long ago, long ago.  
Micah prophesied That Christ would be born in Royal David’s town;  
Redeemer of Israel, promised to all, a King without a crown!  
Rejoice! Rejoice! Em-man---u-el shall come to thee, O Is---ra-el!

Prophets knew long ago that in a manger stall  
Angels and shepherds would find the Lord of all!  
God in human frame, Jesus was His name.  
Prophets knew long ago, long ago.  
Prophets knew ----long ago,-- long ago.  
O come, O come, Em-man----u-el,  
(O come, O come, Em-man---u-el, )  
and ransom captive Is-----ra-el!

*Prophets Knew* CCLI Song # 3604852

*J. Paul Williams Lloyd Larson*

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### **Scripture Lesson Five:** St. Luke 1:26-38

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, favoured 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 favour 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 for ever, 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. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with 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.

This is the Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God**

**CAROL:** "No Wind At The Window"

© 1992 John Bell, Irish melody

Verse 1

No wind at the window  
No knock on the door  
No light from the lampstand  
No foot on the floor  
No dream born of tiredness  
No ghost raised by fear  
Just an angel and a woman  
And a voice in her ear

Verse 3

This child must be born  
That the kingdom might come  
Salvation for many  
Destruction for some  
Both end and beginning  
Both message and sign  
Both victor and victim  
Both yours and divine

Verse 2

Oh Mary oh Mary  
Don't hide from my face  
Be glad that you're favoured  
And filled with God's grace  
The time for redeeming  
The world has begun  
And you are requested  
To mother God's Son

Verse 4

No payment was promised  
No promises made  
No wedding was dated  
No blueprint displayed  
Yet Mary consenting  
To what none could guess  
Replied with conviction  
Tell God I say yes

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**Scripture Lesson Six:** St. Luke 2:1-7

KJV

And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. ([And] this taxing was first made when Quirenius was governor of Syria.) And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn. This is the Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God**

**CAROL:**

"O How Joyfully"

Italian Carol

1. Oh, how joyfully, Oh, how merrily,  
Christmas comes with its grace divine!  
Grace again is beaming, Christ the world redeeming,  
Hail, ye Christians, hail the joyous Christmas time.
2. Oh, how joyfully, Oh, how merrily,  
Christmas comes with its peace divine!  
Peace on earth is reigning, Christ our peace regaining,  
Hail, ye Christians, hail the joyous Christmas time!

*Ancient Latin carol, English Translation 1918, public domain*

**Scripture Lesson Seven:** St. Luke 2:8-20

KJV

And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this [shall be] a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped

in swaddling clothes, 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, and on earth peace, good will toward men. And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. And when they had seen [it], they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. And all they that heard [it] wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things, and pondered [them] in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them. Here ends the reading from the Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

CAROL:

*“There’s A Star In The East”*

**There's a star in the east on Christmas morn  
Rise up shepherd and follow  
It'll lead to the place where the Savior's born  
Rise up shepherd and follow  
Follow, follow  
Rise up shepherd and follow  
Follow the Star of Bethlehem  
Rise up shepherd and follow**

**If you take good heed to the angel’s words  
Rise up shepherd and follow  
You'll forget your flocks  
You'll forget your herds  
Rise up shepherd and follow  
Follow, follow  
Rise up shepherd and follow  
Follow the Star of Bethlehem  
Rise up shepherd and follow**

*African American Spiritual public domain*

## **MESSAGE**

### **GENERAL ADVENT PRAYER:**

Lord Jesus Christ, thank you for coming in the flesh at Bethlehem, and for coming to us whenever we gather in your name. We pray for your church, her mission, the people and pastors. Keep us alert and watchful in support of one another, guard us from everything false and untrue, and shine on us with the light of your holy word. We pray for the nations and people of the whole world. Lift the eyes of those in authority to their duty to govern wisely and well, for the good of all. Curb all terror and replace it with peace. Thank you for providing us with everything we need for daily living. Bring relief to all those affected by natural disaster, terrorism, want or war. Keep us alert and watchful to the needs of others. Please stand by those who wake or watch or weep. Uplift those who are weary. Soothe those who suffer. Shield those who prosper. Come to those from our parish and our community we know in particular need, giving healing in body, mind and soul. Just as Mary heard the Word from the angel, trusted in the ancient promise of salvation and bore a wondrous child from the Spirit’s seed, lead us to hear your word and trust you, so that we may live fruitful lives, filled with the joy of your Holy Spirit. For you live and rule with the Father and Spirit, O Lord Jesus Christ, one God, now and forever. For you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God now and forever.

**Amen.**

THE LORD'S PRAYER:

**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.**

**CLOSING BLESSING:**

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow!

**Praise God, all creatures here below!**

You are the shepherds telling the story.

**We tell it in the streets and across the land.**

You are the wise ones worshipping with thanksgiving.

**We worship with gifts of song and service, talents and treasures.**

You are the angels announcing peace.

**We live with joy and go now in peace.**

The blessing of almighty God, the Father, the Son + and the Holy Spirit, be with you now and always:

**Amen.**

**CHOIR ANTHEM: —“*Mary Did You Know?*”**

Mary, did you know --that your baby boy

Would someday walk on water?

Mary did you know --that your baby boy

Would save our sons and daughters?

Did you know-- that your baby boy Has come to make you new?

This Child that you delivered, ---will soon deliver you.

Mary, did you know-- that your baby boy Will give sight to a blind man?

Mary, did you know-- that your baby boy Will calm a storm with His hand?

Did you know --that your baby boy

Has walked where angels trod? When you kissed your little baby,

Then you kissed the face of God.

The blind will see, the deaf will hear,

The dead will live again;

The lame will leap, and all will speak The praises of the Lamb.

Mary, did you know --that your baby boy is Lord of all creation?

Mary did you know --that your baby boy Will one day rule the nations?

Did you know -- that your baby boy is heaven's perfect Lamb?

This sleeping Child you're holding,

Is the great, the great “I AM!”

***Mary Did You Know?*** CCLI Song # 839225

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**REV. TODD HOEFFS**  
**ADVENT 4 (series C)**  
**Scripture: Micah 5:2-4**  
**December 19, 2021**  
**F, S + HS. Amen.**

My 1<sup>st</sup> Christmas away from my [1<sup>st</sup> home of origin] was spent as a Seminary student in Regina, SK. I was assigned there as a vicar [student pastor in training.] Growing up in Western NY, I never even heard of this place. Just another dot on a map. Certainly the song “No place like Home for the Holidays” took on a different meaning. In Regina, I was on my own. My new church family, my supervising pastor’s family and my soon to be family through marriage all made me feel “at home”. God’s hand was in it. Back in my hometown family roots, already the relatives I grew up with were growing old and had been slowly dying year by year as our family Christmases began to change. Faces were missing around the dinner table. God was getting me ready [and my relatives ready] to say goodbye to one family and embrace another. And in this lesson, God taught me that home isn’t always a place but THE PEOPLE you are with. The love of family makes a home. The love of God makes believers around the world into a family. Prophet Micah witnessed the family of believers in the people of Israel change. Micah lived most of his life in a rural setting, however, prophesied primarily against Jerusalem. He condemned God’s children because of dishonesty in the marketplace and corruption in their governing. He warned of future destruction if ways and hearts were not turned toward God. And in Micah’s words heard this day, he says Bethlehem [NOT JERUSALEM] will be the place of God’s Son to appear. Bethlehem seemed like an unlikely home for the promised Saviour. A suburb of sorts in relation to the big city of Jerusalem. 8 kilometers away. Bethlehem Ephratha is in the vicinity of this landscape. Ephrathah was originally a small Jewish clan of Benjamin within the nation of Israel. Making this area really of no great importance or power in terms of politics, military status, arts and culture. Small, hidden, insignificant Bethlehem originally belonged to the Canaanites. They lived in regions now known as Lebanon, Jordan and Palestine. They were a mix of Jewish, Egyptian and Phoenician , worshipping various gods but not the one true God of Israel. Originally, Bethlehem’s name meant “the house or sanctuary city of Lahum.” “Lahum” was the Canaanite’s god of war. “After the conquest of Palestine, the Jews changed the name *Laham* to make it read *lehem* which means “Bread.”-So Bethlehem the city of David, became the “house of bread.” Its significant that Jesus is born in Bethlehem, the “House of Bread’. This place held the answer to mankind’s deepest need – to be fed by God, on the bread of eternal life. Where one eats of Him and never hungers again. For Jesus comes to feeds us on the love of God. Love which feeds the hope for this world. We also know that by God’s promise to the prophet Samuel, a long time before the prophet Micah. God told him to enter Bethlehem and find a king. God had chosen a new king to replace Saul.

Samuel obeyed the Lord and went to Bethlehem to the family of Jesse. Jesse made his 10 sons walk past Samuel so he could find the one that the Lord had chosen to be King of the whole nation. There was one of Jesse’s sons missing that day. He was out in the field keeping the sheep. Samuel didn’t find God’s anointed king among the 10 big brothers. But when the youngest came in hot and sweaty from being out with the sheep all day, he was anointed to be king of Israel. His name was David and all of this happened in little Bethlehem (1 Samuel 16).

God chooses what seems small to accomplish his big things.

David became the greatest King, not in wealth, power or world status – his son Solomon really reached those pinnacles. David became King and was a “man after God’s own heart”. He sinned greatly but repented often and he put his trust in the Lord for his life.

The truly great and extraordinary king has been promised and is coming into the world. This ultimate Power and Life from ancient days has come into the world in the same way that we human, limited, finite, fragile people all came into the world. God keeps his promises for 1000 years and turns up in a way that is everything opposite to what we might want him to be.

Our God has always been creating His plans in small, seemingly insignificant ways. Patriarch Moses was a reluctant leader. Think of the other prophets; Elijah, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, Isaiah, Micah – all lived in weakness and powerlessness. Or David – chosen so young, making so many mistakes, always forgiven. Think of Elizabeth and Mary – an older woman bearing John the last prophet and a young girl who would carry the Christ child, the hope for her and all generations!

Think of yourself. Your home of origin. Your faith in Christ given in baptism. What's so great about us that we should be chosen to receive God's grace and be here in this place? God with us in the form of Christ with the Holy Spirit makes us great. Great in God's Kingdom. It is by His Word of assurance that get the privileged to sit at Jesus' Table and receive his Bread of Life and Wine of love. God chooses weak people, sinning people, careless people: all the "wrong" people to be with him. The disciples. The tax collectors and sinners He ate with a visited, sharing His holy presence. Thanks be to God! For we now have life and a future in God's work of gathering all people into his family. Even the wise men came to Israel after their long journey from the East they didn't go to Bethlehem. They headed straight for Jerusalem – the big city and the bright lights. The holy city where the huge and awe inspiring temple stood, where the holy sacrifices were offered up to God. At times we miss out on Jesus because we assume he'll show up in big ways or in triumphant times or arrive when we think He better show up. But that's not for us to decide. It's for us to trust that He comes in His own way and time and will work through the people He's given us in our lives.

For the answer to our deepest needs is found in the manger in Bethlehem, and not in the magnificent Temple in Jerusalem. Jesus is found down the street, in a manger, where animals live and feed. In small Bethlehem. It's this humbled Jesus who later goes through the horrific suffering and death so we can live forever with hearts of peace and contentment. The manger isn't far from the cross. Any more than our suffering is far from God's sight or control. The Holy Spirit knows our needs and leads us to Jesus Table where he offers us His very own living bread from heaven, which unites us with His Body and every believer around the world.

In the quiet of home where we enjoy our bread in peace – along with platefuls of other food – we might tend to forget that Jesus has come to be with us. The living Jesus is in the bread and wine in Holy Communion so that he can come into us and live in us in our humble little homes. His Word is food for our souls when we read the Scriptures in the peace and quiet of our homes. Our homes can be the Bethlehem where we feed on the Bread of eternal life.

And so our future as God's family community in this little corner of the earth is secure. God has not stopped working with us and through us. Jesus remains the bread of life Who feeds and the shepherd who stands and protects us with his love, grace, peace and power; as he shapes our minds and hearts so that the word we speak and the action we take reflects the Christ of the Scriptures to the world around us.

Like the people of Micah's day, we wait for his coming. Like a pregnant Mary, we wait for the coming of the world's King, the Saviour Who fights using a manger and a cross, to secure our future as His forgiven brothers and sisters. Who has made His home little Bethlehem and makes into a family whenever 2 or 3 gather together in His holy name. Micah waited. We wait. In faith. In hope. In expectation that our God will work through our humble faithful witness. For Jesus will be the lasting peace in our lives and in our world. We wait in the struggle with joy at the news we have heard and upon which we pin our lives, and live as a family who trusts and hopes.

A wise old pastor and servant of the early days of the church, helping the downtrodden and lowly once said : if you can't find Jesus in the person of need around your door, then you will not find Jesus in the Communion Cup either.

[John Crysostom]

Jesus is visible.

We can see Him.

And He can be seen in us.

Thanks be to God.

Amen.