

Historic Zion Lutheran Church

DIVINE SERVICE FOR THE FEAST OF THE NATIVITY

9:00 am Saturday, December 25, 2021

RECEIVING OF THE LORD'S SUPPER AT ZION

As intended by Christ and as practiced by the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church throughout her history, "Closed Communion" is observed in this congregation, in which the Lord's Supper is distributed only to those:

- (a) who have been **baptized** in the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit;
 - (b) who have been **instructed** in the truth of Holy Scripture as taught in the Lutheran Confessions, who have been **confirmed** in this Lutheran faith, and who now confess the same doctrines that are taught in this congregation, holding membership in a congregation of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod;
 - (c) who **believe that in this sacrament the real body and blood of Christ are truly distributed to them and orally received by them**, bestowing on them the forgiveness of sins, life and salvation;
 - (d) who **sincerely repent** of all their sins, and desire to receive God's forgiveness in this holy meal.
- Guests at our services, before receiving the sacrament, are requested to affirm these facts with one of our pastors. Thank you for honoring our practice. If you are looking for a church home, would like to be a member of Zion, or would like to learn more about the Christian Faith, please speak to one of our pastors about our membership classes.

✠ = *appropriate to make the baptismal sign of the cross*
When "rise" or "kneel" is indicated, it is appropriate to sit if needed

[Rise] Invocation

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen!

The Congregation rises, turns towards the entrance of the nave, and faces the Cross of Christ, the reminder of Christ's promise to come and dwell among His people as they are gathered in His name.

Processional Hymn Oh, Come, All Ye Faithful Burgundy Hymn 379

[Be Seated]

Kyrie Intonation for Celebrant and Organ setting by S. Scheidt

[Rise]

Gloria in Excelsis Hark! the Herald Angels Sing Burgundy Hymn 380

Salutation

The Lord be with you.



And with thy spir— it.

Collect for Christmas Day: *Almighty God, grant that the birth of Your only-begotten Son in the flesh may set us free from the bondage of sin; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.*



A ——— men!

[Be Seated]

+ The Office of the Word of God +

Old Testament Reading Isaiah 52:7-10

[After the reading] *This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.*

Gradual Hymn Rejoice, Rejoice Burgundy Hymn 391

Epistle of the Day Hebrews 1:1-12

[After the reading] *This is the word of the Lord.* Thanks be to God.

[Rise and face the Processional Cross for the Gospel Procession.]

Alleluia Sequence Oh, Rejoice, Ye Christians Burgundy Hymn 897

[Sing the Twelve-fold Alleluia below and stanzas 1 & 2 BEFORE the Gospel.

Stanzas 3 & 4 will be sung after the Gospel is proclaimed.]



Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu -

ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le -

lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le -

lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia!

Holy Gospel St. John 1:1-14

[The Gospel is announced.]

[The Gospel is proclaimed.]



Glo - ry be to Thee, O Lord!

Praise be to Thee, O Christ!

Hymn Oh, Rejoice, Ye Christians Burgundy Hymn 897

[Sing stanzas 3 & 4. After singing stanza 4, sing the Twelve-fold Alleluia below.]



Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu -

ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le -

lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le -

lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia!

Confession of Faith (The Nicene Creed)

I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of His Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God, Begotten, not made, Being of one substance with the Father, By whom all things were made; Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven

[Bow] And was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary, And was made man;

And was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried; And the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures; And ascended into heaven, And sits at the right hand of the Father; And He will come again with glory to judge both the living and the dead; Whose kingdom will have no end.

And I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life, Who proceeds from the Father and the Son, Who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, Who spoke by the Prophets. And I believe in one Holy Christian and Apostolic Church. I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins, And I look for the resurrection of the dead, And the life ✠ of the world to come. Amen!

[Be Seated]

Hymn of the Day Of the Father's Heart Begotten

Words by Prudentius (c. 348–413)

Melody from *Piae Cantiones* (1582)



[Choir] 1. Of the Fa - ther's heart be - got - ten,
 [Choir] 2. By his word was all cre - a - ted;
 [All] 3. He as - sumed this mor - tal bo - dy,
 [Women] 4. O how blest that won - drous birth - day,
 [Men] 5. This is he, whom seer and sy - bil
 [All] 6. Sing ye heights of heav'n, his prais - es;



Ere the world from cha - os rose, He is
 He com - mand - ed and 'twas done; Earth and
 Frail and fee - ble, doomed to die, That the
 When the Maid the curse re - trieved, Brought to
 Sang in a - ges long gone by; This is
 An - gels and arch - an - gels, sing! Where - so -



Al - pha: from that Foun - tain All that
 sky and bound - less o - cean, U - ni -
 race from dust cre - a - ted Might not
 birth man - kind's sal - va - tion, By the
 he of old re - veal - ed In the
 e'er ye be, ye faith - ful, Let your



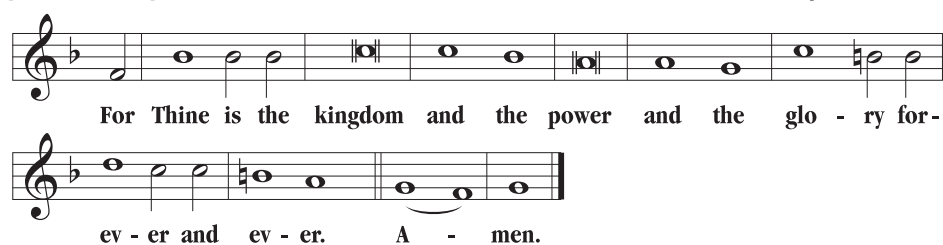
is and hath been flows; He is O - me -
 verse of three in one, All that sees the
 pe - rish ut - ter - ly, Which the dread - ful
 Ho - ly Ghost con - ceived; And the Babe, the
 page of pro - phe - cy; Lo! he comes, the
 joy - ous an - thems ring, Ev' - ry tongue his



ga, of all things Yet to come the
 moon's soft ra - diance, All that breathes be -
 Law had sen - tenced In the depths of
 world's Re - deem - er, In her lov - ing
 pro - mised Sa - viour; Let the world his
 name con - fess - ing, Count - less voi - ces

[Kneel] **Lord's Prayer**

[Pastor chants:] *Our Father who art in heaven; but deliver us from evil.*



For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glo - ry for -
ev - er and ev - er. A - men.

Words of Institution, Pax Domini

The peace of the Lord be with you always!



A - men.

Agnus Dei



1-3. O Christ, Thou Lamb of God, that tak-est a-way the sin of the world,
have mer-cy up - on us. Grant us Thy Peace. A - - - men!

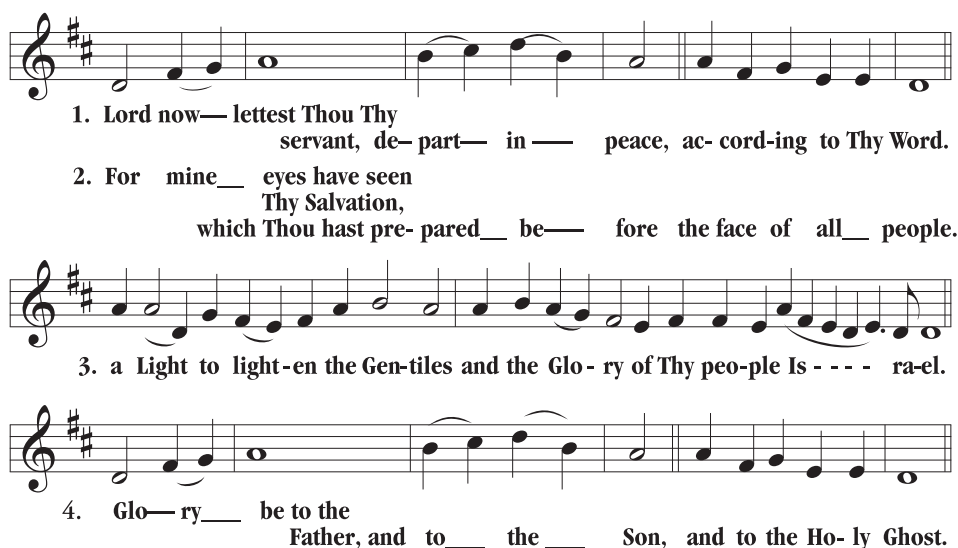
[Be Seated]

Distribution Hymns ... See amid the Winter's Snow Burgundy Hymn 373
What Child Is This Burgundy Hymn 370
Now Sing We, Now Rejoice Burgundy Hymn 386

[Rise] **Eucharistic Benediction**

The Body and Blood of your Lord Jesus Christ strengthen and preserve you in body and soul to life everlasting! ✠ Depart in Peace! Amen!

Post-Communion Canticle The Nunc Dimittis



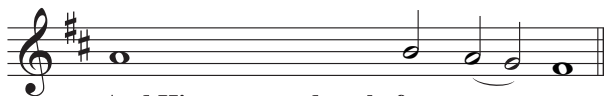
1. Lord now— lettest Thou Thy servant, de— part— in — peace, ac— cord— ing to Thy Word.
 2. For mine__ eyes have seen Thy Salvation, which Thou hast pre— pared__ be— fore the face of all__ people.
 3. a Light to light—en the Gen—tiles and the Glo— ry of Thy peo—ple Is - - - ra-el.
 4. Glo— ry__ be to the Father, and to__ the__ Son, and to the Ho— ly Ghost.



5. As it — was in the beginning, is now, and e-ver shall be, world with-out end. A-men.

Post Communion Rite

Oh, give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good.



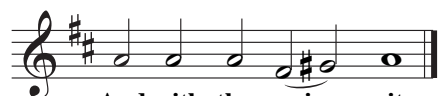
And His mercy endureth for — ev — er.

Prayer of Thanksgiving ... one God, now and forever.



A — men.

The Lord be with you.



And with thy spir — rit.

Bless we the Lord.



Thanks be to God.

Benediction

The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious unto you. The Lord lift up His countenance upon you and ✠ give you peace.



A-men, A-men, A - men.

During the Recessional, the Congregation turns and faces the Processional Cross, the symbol of Christ's promise to remain with and lead His people as they now go and live in the world in His name.

Recessional Hymn Joy to the World Burgundy Hymn 387

Postlude From Heaven Above J. S. Bach



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The hymn, Of the Father's Heart Begotten, and the Twelve-fold "Alleluia" are in the public domain.

Readings for the Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord

The Old Testament Reading is Isaiah 52:7-10

How beautiful upon the mountains
are the feet of him who brings good news,
who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness,
who publishes salvation,
who says to Zion, "Your God reigns."
The voice of your watchmen—they lift up their voice;
together they sing for joy;
for eye to eye they see
the return of the LORD to Zion.
Break forth together into singing,
you waste places of Jerusalem,
for the LORD has comforted his people;
he has redeemed Jerusalem.
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 Epistle is Hebrews 1:1-12

Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

For to which of the angels did God ever say,
"You are my Son, today I have begotten you"?

Or again,

"I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son"?

And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world, he says,

"Let all God's angels worship him."

Of the angels he says,

"He makes his angels winds, and his ministers a flame of fire."

But of the Son he says,

"Your throne, O God, is forever and ever,

the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom.
You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness;
therefore God, your God, has anointed you
with the oil of gladness beyond your companions.”

And,

“You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning,
and the heavens are the work of your hands;
they will perish, but you remain;
they will all wear out like a garment,
like a robe you will roll them up,
like a garment they will be changed.
But you are the same, and your years will have no end.”

The Gospel is John 1:1-18

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light.

The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John bore witness about him, and cried out, “This was he of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.’”) For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.

Hymns for the Feast of the Nativity of our Lord

LSB379 O Come All Ye Faithful

John F. Wade

1. O come, all ye faithful, Joyful and triumphant!
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem;
Come and behold Him Born the king of angels;

Refrain: O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
Christ the Lord!

2. Highest, most holy, Light of Light eternal,
Born of a virgin, a mortal He comes;
Son of the Father Now in flesh appearing! *Refrain*
3. Sing, choirs of angels, Sing in exultation,
Sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!
Glory to God In the highest: *Refrain*
4. Yea, Lord, we greet Thee, Born this happy morning;
Jesus, to Thee be glory giv'n!
Word of the Father Now in flesh appearing! *Refrain*

LSB380 Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

Charles Wesley

1. Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King;
Peace on earth and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled!"
Joyful, all ye nations, rise, Join the triumph of the skies;
With the angelic host proclaim, "Christ is born in Bethlehem!"

Refrain: Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King!"

2. Christ, by highest heav'n adored, Christ, the everlasting Lord,
Late in time behold Him come, Offspring of a virgin's womb.
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see, Hail the incarnate Deity!
Pleased as Man with man to dwell, Jesus, our Immanuel! *Refrain*
3. Hail, the heav'n-born Prince of Peace! Hail, the Sun of Righteousness!
Light and life to all He brings, Ris'n with healing in His wings.
Mild He lays His glory by, Born that man no more may die,
Born to raise the sons of earth, Born to give them second birth. *Refrain*

LSB391 Rejoice, Rejoice This Happy Morn

Birgitte Katerine Boye.

1. Rejoice, rejoice this happy morn, A Savior unto us is born,
The Christ, the Lord of glory!
His lowly birth in Bethlehem The angels from on high proclaim
And sing redemption's story!
My soul, extol God's great favor; Bless Him ever For salvation;
Give Him praise and adoration!"

LSB897 O Rejoice, Ye Christians Loudly

Christian Keimann

Twelvefold Alleluia: Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

1. O rejoice, ye Christians, loudly, For our joy has now begun;
Wondrous things our God has done.
Tell abroad his goodness proudly, Who our race has honored thus,
That He deigns to dwell with us.

Refrain: Joy, O joy, beyond all gladness, Christ has done away with sadness!
Hence, all sorrow and repining, For the Sun of Grace is shining!

2. See, my soul, thy Savior chooses Weakness here and poverty;
In such love He comes to thee.
Neither crib nor cross refuses; All He suffers for thy good
To redeem thee by His blood. *Refrain*

The Reading of the Holy Gospel

3. Lord, how shall I thank Thee rightly? I acknowledge that by Thee
I am saved eternally.
Let me not forget it lightly, But to Thee at all times cleave
And my heart true peace receive. *Refrain*
4. Jesus, guard and guide Thy members, Fill them with Thy boundless grace,
Hear their prayers in ev'ry place.
Fan to flame faith's glowing embers; Grant all Christians, far and near,
Holy peace, a glad new year! *Refrain then Twelvefold Alleluia*

Of the Father's Heart Begotten

Prudentius

Printed in Service Bulletin

LSB378 Break Forth, O Beauteous Heavenly Light

Johann Rist

1. Break forth, O beauteous heav'nly light, And usher in the morning.
Ye shepherds, shrink not with affright, The day of grace is dawning.
This Child, though weak in infancy, Our confidence and joy shall be,
The pow'r of Satan breaking, Our peace with God now making.

LSB621 Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence Liturgy of St. James, 5th cent.

- Choir only
1. Let all mortal flesh keep silence And with fear and trembling stand;
Ponder nothing earthly minded, For with blessing in His hand
Christ our God to earth descending Comes our homage to demand.
 - M 2. King of kings yet born of Mary, As of old on earth He stood,
Lord of lords, in human vesture, In the body and the blood,
He will give to all the faithful His own self for heav'nly food.
 - W 3. Rank on rank the host of heaven Spreads its vanguard on the way
As the Light of Light descending From the realms of endless day,
Comes the pow'rs of hell to vanquish As the darkness clears away.
 4. At His feet the six-winged seraph, Cherubim with sleepless eye,
Veil their faces to the presence As with ceaseless voice they cry:
"Alleluia, alleluia! Alleluia, Lord Most High!"

LSB373 See amid the Winter's Snow

Edward Caswall

1. See amid the winter's snow, Born for us on earth below,
See, the gentle Lamb appears, Promised from eternal years.

Refrain: Hail, O ever-blessed morn! Hail, redemption's happy dawn!
Sing through all Jerusalem: "Christ is born in Bethlehem!"

2. Lo, within a stable lies He who built the starry skies,
He who, throned in height sublime, Sits amid the cherubim. *Refrain*
3. Sacred Infant, all divine, What a tender love was Thine,
Thus to come from highest bliss Down to such a world as this! *Refrain*
4. Teach, O teach us, holy child, By Thy face so meek and mild,
Teach us to resemble Thee In Thy sweet humility. *Refrain*

LSB370 What Child Is This

Juraj Tranovsky

1. What child is this, who, laid to rest, On Mary's lap is sleeping?
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet While shepherds watch are keeping?
This, this is Christ the king, Whom shepherds guard and angels
sing; Haste, haste to bring Him laud, The babe, the son of Mary!
2. Why lies He in such mean estate Where ox and ass are feeding?
Good Christian, fear; for sinners here The silent Word is pleading.
Nails, spear shall pierce Him through, The cross be borne for me,
for you; Hail, hail the Word made flesh, The babe, the son of Mary!
3. So bring Him incense, gold, and myrrh; Come, peasant king, to own Him.
The King of kings salvation brings; Let loving hearts enthrone Him.
Raise, raise the song on high, The virgin sings her lullaby;
Joy, joy, for Christ is born, The babe, the son of Mary!

LSB386 Now Sing We, Now Rejoice

Latin and German, 14th cent.

1. Now sing we, now rejoice, Now raise to heav'n our voice;
He from whom joy streameth Poor in a manger lies;
Not so brightly beameth The sun in yonder skies.
Thou my Savior art! Thou my Savior art!
2. Come from on high to me; I cannot rise to thee.
Cheer my wearied spirit, O pure and holy Child;
Through Thy grace and merit, Blest Jesus, Lord most mild,
Draw me unto Thee! Draw me unto Thee!
3. Now through His Son doth shine The Father's grace divine.
Death was reigning o'er us Through sin and vanity
Till He opened for us A bright eternity.
May we praise Him there! May we praise Him there!
4. Oh, where shall joy be found? Where but on heav'nly ground?
Where the angels singing With all His saints unite,
Sweetest praises bringing In heav'nly joy and light,
Oh, that we were there! Oh, that we were there!

LSB387 Joy to the World

Isaac Watts

1. Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth receive her King:
Let ev'ry heart prepare Him room And heav'n and nature sing,
And heav'n and nature sing, And heav'n and nature sing.

2. Joy to the earth, the Savior reigns! Let men their songs employ,
While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat the sounding joy, Repeat the sounding joy.
3. No more let sins and sorrows grow Nor thorns infest the ground;
He comes to make His blessings flow Far as the curse is found,
Far as the curse is found, Far as the curse is found.
4. He rules the world with truth and grace And makes the nations prove
The glories of His righteousness And wonders of His love,
And wonders of His love, And wonders of His love.

The Feast of the Nativity

December 25, 2021

9:00 AM



“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ... And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.”

John 1:1, 14



Poinsettia Dedications



In loving memory of our parents Carl & Myrtle Albersmeyer
and Byrle & Joyce Greenamyre
by Carl & Rosie Albersmeyer and Family

In loving memory of Walter & Adeline Bengs and Bill Bengs
by Clarann Bengs

In loving memory of our parents
Paul & Esther Bieberich and David & Agnes Shutt
by Don & Beth Bieberich

In loving memory of our parents
Paul & Esther Bieberich and Paul Manze & Hilda Bieberich
By Dwight & Carol Lu Bieberich

In memory of my parents
Robert & Viola Crouse
by James R. Crouse

In loving memory of Donald Ganaway
by Julie Ganaway

In loving memory of our wife, mother and Baba Shirely Goeglein:
You're in our hearts forever!
by Stan, Tim, Jenny, Tim & Paul Goeglein

Given in Loving memory of Georgianna Ostermeyer
by her children Karen, David, Kim, and Kirk

To my loving parents Richard & Virginia Hollman
by Beth Hollman

In loving memory of Spiro & Anne Kostoff
and Karen Kostoff Wood
by Karl Kostoff and Marty & Judy Thomas



In loving memory of Dr. Robert & Katherine Leininger
and Fred, Betty, Teresa & John Beckman
by Kevin & Maribeth Leininger

In honor of Mr. & Mrs. Robert Manth,
Mr. & Mrs. Albert Manth,
Mr. & Mrs. Ferdinand Bornkamp,
and Mrs. Clara Tegtmeier
by Jennifer Manth

In loving memory of Georgianna Ostersmeyer
by her husband Walter Ostermeyer

In loving memory of our fathers, Earl Klein and Darwin Punke
“Unto you is born ... a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:11)
by Pastor & Marge Punke

In loving memory of my parents Albert & Emma Dirks
by Marilynn Shafter

In loving memory of my wife Jill E. Stokes
and my parents David & Savannah Stokes
by Clarence “Bo” Stokes

To the Glory of Our Newborn King!
by Jim & Judy Voelz

Rejoice Our Savior is here
by Bill & Carolyn Wallschlaeger

With thanks to God for sending His Son Jesus as Savior.
“O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord!”
by André Woodard

Celebrate

The Birth Of Christ

Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church

The mission of Zion Lutheran Church is to be the body of Christ gathered at Hanna and Creighton in Fort Wayne, Indiana to:

- *Receive Christ's gifts in baptism, preaching, teaching, and the Eucharist;*
- *Reach out to those who do not know the love of God in Christ;*
- *Reveal Christ's love for the world through acts of kindness and mercy toward all.*

2313 Hanna St., Ft. Wayne, IN 46803
744-1389 Fax 744-2421

The Pastoral Ministry At Zion

Senior Pastor:
Field Workers:

Rev. Douglas D. Punke, MDiv (260-341-5397)
Erik Saunders, Patrick Jackson

The Teaching Staff At Lutheran South Unity

Teachers:

**Barry Chrzan, Gene Koch, Yvonne Schwanz, Danielle Ramsey, Merideth Tourney,
Hannah Maresh, John Fink, Cathie Wakeland, Natalie Reynolds**

Sheila Nehrenz, Principal

The Support Staff

Organist and Director of Parish Music:
Church Office Manager:

Michael Hollman, MM
Melvia Culpher



What Doctor Luther Says:

About the Word Becoming Weak and Mortal Flesh for Us

And the Word became flesh.

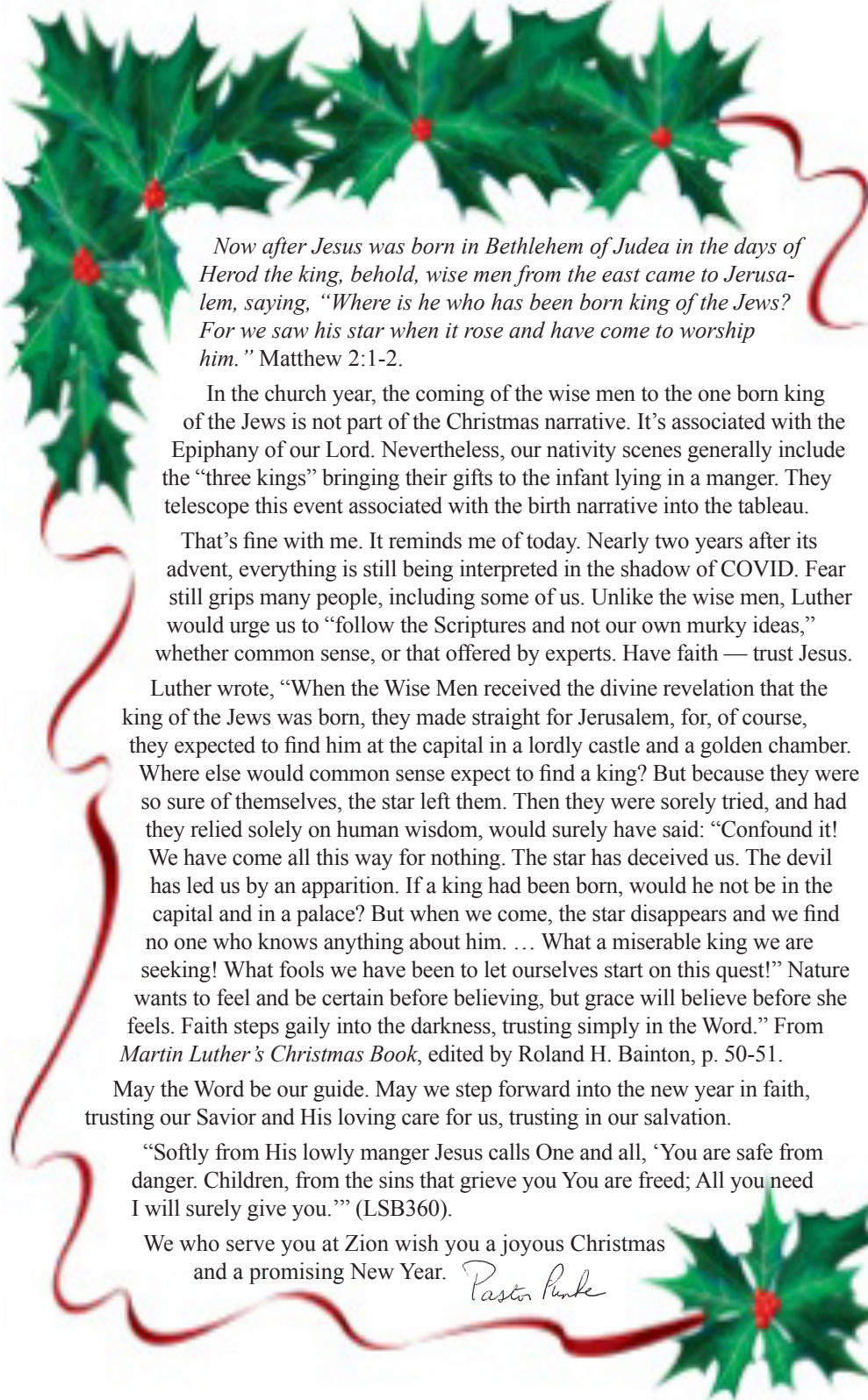
The evangelist states: “The same Word of which I declared that it was in the beginning, through which all things were made, which was the Life and Light of man, became flesh.” In Scriptural parlance “flesh” denotes a complete human being, as in John 3:6, where we read: “That which is born of the flesh is flesh.” It goes without saying that of a woman both body and soul are born, not an inanimate mass of flesh, a physical being of flesh and blood, designated by Scripture with that one word “flesh.” ...

Thus the most precious treasure and the strongest consolation we Christians have is this: that the Word, the true and natural Son of God, became man, with flesh and blood like that of any other human; that He became incarnate for our sakes in order that we might enter into great glory, that our flesh and blood, skin and hair, hands and feet, stomach and back might reside in heaven as God does, and in order that we might boldly defy the devil and whatever else assails us. We are convinced that all our members belong in heaven as heirs of heaven’s realm. ...

It is true, the evangelist might have said: “The Word became man.” However, he adapts himself to Scriptural parlance and says: “He became flesh.” He does so to point out its weakness and its mortality. For Christ took on the human nature, which was mortal and subject to the terrible wrath and judgment of God because of the sins of the human race. And this anger was felt by the weak and mortal flesh of Christ.

With that word “flesh” the evangelist wanted to indicate this inexpressible humiliation. Isaiah says (53:10): “When You make His soul,” that is, His life, “an offering for sin, He shall see His seed; He shall prolong His days.”

Luther’s Works, 22:110-11.



Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him." Matthew 2:1-2.

In the church year, the coming of the wise men to the one born king of the Jews is not part of the Christmas narrative. It's associated with the Epiphany of our Lord. Nevertheless, our nativity scenes generally include the "three kings" bringing their gifts to the infant lying in a manger. They telescope this event associated with the birth narrative into the tableau.

That's fine with me. It reminds me of today. Nearly two years after its advent, everything is still being interpreted in the shadow of COVID. Fear still grips many people, including some of us. Unlike the wise men, Luther would urge us to "follow the Scriptures and not our own murky ideas," whether common sense, or that offered by experts. Have faith — trust Jesus.

Luther wrote, "When the Wise Men received the divine revelation that the king of the Jews was born, they made straight for Jerusalem, for, of course, they expected to find him at the capital in a lordly castle and a golden chamber. Where else would common sense expect to find a king? But because they were so sure of themselves, the star left them. Then they were sorely tried, and had they relied solely on human wisdom, would surely have said: "Confound it! We have come all this way for nothing. The star has deceived us. The devil has led us by an apparition. If a king had been born, would he not be in the capital and in a palace? But when we come, the star disappears and we find no one who knows anything about him. . . . What a miserable king we are seeking! What fools we have been to let ourselves start on this quest!" Nature wants to feel and be certain before believing, but grace will believe before she feels. Faith steps gaily into the darkness, trusting simply in the Word." From *Martin Luther's Christmas Book*, edited by Roland H. Bainton, p. 50-51.

May the Word be our guide. May we step forward into the new year in faith, trusting our Savior and His loving care for us, trusting in our salvation.

"Softly from His lowly manger Jesus calls One and all, 'You are safe from danger. Children, from the sins that grieve you You are freed; All you need I will surely give you.'" (LSB360).

We who serve you at Zion wish you a joyous Christmas
and a promising New Year.

Pastor Pank

