



HOPE
LOVE
PEACE * JOY

A Children's Christmas Service

December 14, 2025
Abiding Word Evangelical Lutheran Church
8470 Landen Drive Maineville, Ohio

345 Where Shepherds Lately Knelt



1 Where shep-herds late - ly knelt and kept the an - gel's word,
2 In that un - like - ly place I find him as they said:
3 How should I not have known I - sa - iah would be there,
4 Can I, will I for - get how Love was born, and burned



I come in half - be - lief, a pil - grim strange - ly stirred;
sweet new - born babe, how frail! And in a man - ger bed:
his proph - e - cies ful - filled? With pound - ing heart I stare:
its way in - to my heart— un - asked, un - forced, un - earned,



but there is room and wel - come there for me,
a still, small voice to cry one day for me,
a child, a son, the Prince of Peace for me,
to die, to live, and not a - lone for me,



but there is room and wel - come there for me.
a still, small voice to cry one day for me.
a child, a son, the Prince of Peace for me.
to die, to live, and not a - lone for me?

Text: Jaroslav J. Vajda, 1919–2008
Tune: Carl F. Schalk, 1929–2021
Text: © 1986 Concordia Publishing House. Used by permission: OneLicense no. 714908
Tune: © 1986 GIA Publications, Inc. Used by permission: OneLicense no. 714908

Stand

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

All: Amen.

Opening Dialogue (*excerpts from Psalm 33*):

Leader: Sing joyfully to the Lord, you righteous; it is fitting for the upright to praise him.

Congregation: For the word of the Lord is right and true; he is faithful in all he does.

Leader: By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, their starry host by the breath of his mouth.

Children: Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the people of the world revere him.

Leader: The plans of the Lord stand firm forever, the purposes of his heart through all generations.

Congregation: We wait in hope for the Lord; he is our help and our shield.

Leader: In him our hearts rejoice, for we trust in his holy name.

All: May your unfailing love be with us, Lord, even as we put our hope in you.

Leader: Heavenly Father, our hearts again rejoice this day as we hear sweet angel voices proclaiming "Christ is born!" Softly, Jesus calls from his lowly manger, saying, "You are safe from danger. Children, from the sins that grieve you, you are freed; all you need I will surely give you." Come, then, banish all our sadness! Accept our songs of gladness. Fix our eyes on the day when we shall live with you forever on high in that joy which will vanish never; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord (*based on "All My Heart Again Rejoices," sts. 1,5-6 [CW 329]*).

All: Amen.

Be seated

1. HOPE

Narration: Cate

What do you hope for? Why do we all need hope? It's likely no surprise to any of us that hope often stands alongside something negative—difficult circumstances, adverse conditions, or some less than ideal reality. Are you discontent? Are you suffering in some way? Do you have uncertainties? Do you feel broken in some way? When the answer to any of these questions is yes, we need hope. Even when life is going well, we hope the good wave won't come crashing into darker shores too soon—or ever, if possible.

When God created the world, hope did not exist. Nor did it *need* to exist. Think about it: There was no need for hope because God created a perfect world. The perfect people God created—Adam and Eve—did not need hope because they had it all: peace with God and each other, joy in the wonders of his perfect world, and love perfectly shown and received in all ways. There was no discontent, no suffering, no uncertainties, and no brokenness. But then . . .

All Men and Boys:

The serpent said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden?’”.

All Women and Girls:

The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die’ ”.

All Men and Boys:

“You will not certainly die,” the serpent said to the woman. For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil”.

All Women and Girls:

When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.

Narration: Cate

What had they done? And what does it mean for all of us here today? The need for hope was born. From that moment forward, all people ever born, right up to all of us here today, are born sinful, will someday die, and have earned an eternity in hell.

Recitation: Amelia

Sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned (Romans 5:12).

Congregation:

**Everyone has turned away, all have become corrupt;
there is no one who does good, not even one** (*Psalm 53:3*).

Narration: Cate

We all desperately need hope, just as Adam and Eve did. With generations of God's people, we confess our sins.

556 All Mankind Fell in Adam's Fall



1 All man-kind fell in Ad - am's fall; one com - mon
2 Through all our pow'rs cor - rup - tion creeps and us in
3 From hearts de - praved, to e - vil prone, flow thoughts and



sin in - fects us all. From one to all the
dread - ful bond - age keeps; in guilt we draw our
deeds of sin a - lone; God's im - age lost, the



curse de - scends, and o - ver all God's wrath im - pends.
in - fant breath and reap its fruits of woe and death.
dark - ened soul nor seeks nor finds its heav'n - ly goal.

Text: Lazarus Spengler, 1479–1534; tr. Matthias Loy, 1828–1915
Tune: Louis Bourgeois, c. 1510–c. 1561
Text and tune: Public domain

Lighting of the Hope candle

Narration: Karl

God did not leave Adam and Eve in despair. He promised a Savior from sin, death, and hell.

Recitation: Cathrine

The Lord God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, Cursed are you above all livestock and all wild animals! . . . I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel” (Genesis 3:14-15).

Narration: Karl

When God said this to the devil, who had taken the form of a serpent, God was promising Adam and Eve a Savior, a unique offspring who would defeat the devil forever. But this promise wasn't just for Adam and Eve; it is for all of us too! Tonight, let's celebrate how God in his great love provided the hope we need by sending *the* Offspring—Jesus. Let's explore God's Word, in which “everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope” (Romans 15:4). Let's look at prophecy, fulfillment, and promise, and by these renew our hope in the peace, joy, and love of God our Father and Jesus Christ, his Son, our Savior.

304 What Hope! An Eden Prophesied

1 What hope! An E - den proph - e - sied where
2 A shoot will sprout from Jes - se's stem, a
3 As ban - ner of God's love un - furled, Christ
4 Come, Je - sus, come, Mes - si - ah Lord, lost

tame live with the wild, the lamb and li - on
branch from Da - vid's line, a Prince of Peace in
came to suf - fer loss, that by his death a
Par - a - dise re - store; lead past the an - gel's

side by side, led by a lit - tle child!
Beth - le - hem: the fruit of God's de - sign.
dy - ing world would ral - ly to the cross.
flam - ing sword—come, o - pen heav - en's door.

Text: Stephen P. Starke, b. 1955
Tune: Repository of Sacred Music, Part Second, Harrisburg, 1813, ed. John Wyeth
Text: © 1998 Stephen P. Starke, admin. Concordia Publishing House. Used by permission: OneLicense no. 714908
Tune: Public domain

2. PEACE

Narration: Emma

After God made the first promise of the Savior in the Garden of Eden, questions were natural. Who would he be? How would we recognize him? What would he do? What would it mean for life now and beyond the grave? As time passed and the promise awaited fulfillment, God answered these questions through his prophets.

Recitation: Jude

To us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end (Isaiah 9:6-7).

Recitation: Titus

He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed (Isaiah 53:2,5).

Recitation: Amelia

“But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.” He will stand and shepherd his flock. . . . They will live securely, for then his greatness will reach to the ends of the earth. And he will be our peace (Micah 5:2,4-5a).

Lighting of the Peace candle

Narration: Emma

Some of the answers are straightforward: This Savior would be born just like any other human child, in the town of Bethlehem. There is also this common answer regarding what he would do: He would achieve peace. He would *be* our peace. Does that seem hard to believe? The conflicts around the world are the exact opposite of peace. Do you feel at peace? Perhaps you and I do briefly from time to time, but daily we face all kinds of things that oppose any sense of lasting peace—personal failures, strained relationships, myriad tasks that are expected at work and are required to keep the household humming. In this broken world, peace always seems elusive. Consider what these psalm writers said:

Recitation: Cathrine

They do not speak peaceably, but devise false accusations against those who live quietly in the land (Psalm 35:20).

Recitation: Matt

Too long have I lived among those who hate peace (Psalm 120:6).

Narration: Emma

But enter Jesus. He would suffer in our place the eternal punishment we each deserve. He would restore our peace with God and make peace possible among the people of God. God's forgiveness grants peace to our minds, consciences, and souls. Jesus even made it possible for us to be at peace in the face of death.

What price would you pay for such peace? How can you make sure it is yours? Such profound and eternal peace is beyond price. It is too lofty to attain by any effort or means of our own. But when the time was right, God sent Jesus—to us and for us and without cost—as recorded by Luke.

Recitation: Joe

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) And everyone went to their own town to register (Luke 2:1-3).

Boys: Titus / Jude / Joe / Matt

So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child (Luke 2:4-5).

Girls: Cathrine / Amelia

While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them (Luke 2:6-7).

330 Peace Came to Earth



1 Peace came to earth at last that cho-sen night when an-gels
2 And who could be the same for hav-ing held the in-fant
3 You show the Fa-ther none has ev-er seen, in flesh and
4 How else could I have known you, O my God! How else could



clove the sky with song and light and God em-bod-ied
in their arms and lat-er felt the wound-ed hands and
blood you bore our griefs and pain, in bread and wine you
I have loved you, O my God! How else could I em-



love and sheathed his might— Who could but gasp: Im-man-u-el!
side, all doubts dis-pelled— Who could but sigh: Im-man-u-el!
vis-it us a-gain— Who could but see: Im-man-u-el!
brace you, O my God! Who could but pray: Im-man-u-el!



Who could but sing: Im - man - u - el!
Who could but shout: Im - man - u - el!
Who could but thrill: Im - man - u - el!
Who could but praise: Im - man - u - el!

Text: Jaroslav J. Vajda, 1919–2008

Tune: Richard Jeffrey, b. 1952; arr. Mark Kellner, 1959–2015, alt.

Text: © 1984 Concordia Publishing House. Used by permission: OneLicense no. 714908

Tune: © 2000 MorningStar Music Publishers, Inc. Used by permission: OneLicense no. 714908

3. JOY

Narration: Eleanor

There are many short verses in the Bible. Job 3:2 is “He said.” Famously, John 11:35 says, “Jesus wept.” Here is another one: “Rejoice always” (1 Thessalonians 5:16). Always? Just as peace seems elusive, so does joy—at least, joy *all the time*. How can we be joyful when we are sick or injured? when we are suffering consequences for our poor choices? when friends or family somehow hurt us, or worse yet, when we hurt them? Because of our own sin and life in a world that is affected by sin, we tend toward sorrow rather than joy.

Recitation: Jude

Joy is gone from our hearts; our dancing has turned to mourning. The crown has fallen from our head. Woe to us, for we have sinned (Lamentations 5:15-16)!

Narration: Eleanor

There were shepherds near Bethlehem the night Jesus was born. They too were sinners living in a fallen world. Consider their situation: They were working the night shift while their families slept. They fended off dangers for the flock, or they faced the consequences for fleeing from danger and abandoning the flock. They were endlessly saving dumb animals from forever making bad and dangerous decisions. What could bring these shepherds joy? What could bring us joy as we navigate trade-offs between work and family, difficult decisions, and the fallout from our sinfulness and that of others?

Recitation: Joe

There were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them (Luke 2:8-10),

Recitation: Titus

“Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger” (Luke 2:10-12).

Recitation: Matt

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying (Luke 2:13),

All: Jude / Joe / Titus / Matt

“Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests” (Luke 2:14).

Hymn: “Joy to the World” st. 1 (CW 353) – Sung by Children

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 heav’n and nature sing.

Lighting of the Joy candle

Narration: Cate

The joy we seek, the joy Paul tells us to have always, comes from the Savior born for us! With the shepherds that first Christmas night, we hurry to see him.

Recitation: Matt

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another,

Recitation: Joe

“Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.” So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger (Luke 2:15-16).

Narration: Cate

Where do we go when our hearts are heavy with guilt? See Jesus in the manger, born to give us peace in sins forgiven! What do we hold on to when our death looms large? See Jesus in the manger, born to ensure the hope of life eternal! What do we do upon seeing this peace and hope in our Jesus, who is lying in the manger? What did the shepherds do?

Recitation: Titus

When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them.

Recitation: Jude

The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told (Luke 2:17-18,20).

Narration: Cate

The peace and hope we have in Jesus are not just for us gathered here; they are for everyone—people all around us who suffer under the curse of Adam but to whom Jesus offers hope and peace and joy. Like the shepherds, we have good news to share with the whole world!

353 Joy to the World



2 Joy to the earth, the Sav - ior reigns! Let men their
3 No more let sins and sor - rows grow nor thorns in -
4 He rules the world with truth and grace and makes the



songs em - ploy, while fields and floods, rocks, hills, and
fest the ground; he comes to make his bless - ings
na - tions prove the glo - ries of his right - eous -



plains re - peat the sound - ing joy, re - peat the sound - ing
flow far as the curse is found, far as the curse is
ness and won - ders of his love, and won - ders of his



joy, re - peat, re - peat the sound - ing joy.
found, far as, far as the curse is found.
love, and won - ders, won - ders of his love.

Text: Isaac Watts, 1674-1748
Tune: George Frideric Handel, 1685-1759, adapt.
Text and tune: Public domain

4. LOVE

Narration: Karl

What makes this all possible? We know our sins are great and many. Does your conscience still accuse? Does your soul still yearn? Does your mind still ask: How can we possibly have firm and uninterrupted hope, peace, and joy? Do you wonder: Why would God do this for *me*? After all, Paul wrote to the Romans, “Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die” (Romans 5:7). Thankfully, Paul doesn’t stop there. He continues:

Recitation: Amelia

God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8).

Narration: Karl

Love—God’s amazing and perfect love—is behind it all. Addressing a different group of Christians, Paul wrote:

Recitation: Cathrine

Because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved (Ephesians 2:4-5).

Lighting of the Love candle

Narration: Karl

God has such great love for us that he made certain we would have hope beyond the grave, peace in the forgiveness of all our sins, and joy in these most gracious gifts! We have them because God sent his Son Jesus to be our Savior. We have them despite what we may see, think, or feel. As one Christian songwriter has said it, “I can’t live by what I feel but by the truth your Word reveals.” That Word says this:

Recitation: Cathrine

This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins (1 John 4:9-10).

Narration: Karl

But does God’s love ever seem far off? Do you ever wonder if it has run out or if it could be revoked at some point? Again, we live by this truth of God’s Word, his perfect promise and commitment to us:

Recitation: Amelia

I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:38-39).

358 Of the Father's Love Begotten



1 Of the Fa - ther's love be - got - ten ere the worlds be -
2 Oh, that birth for - ev - er bless - ed when the vir - gin,
3 This is he whom seers and sa - ges sang of old with



gan to be, he is Al - pha and O - me - ga,
full of grace, by the Ho - ly Ghost con - ceiv - ing,
one ac - cord, whom the voic - es of the proph - ets



he the source, the end - ing he,
bore the Sav - ior of our race,
prom - ised in their faith - ful word.



of the things that are, that have been,
and the babe, the world's Re - deem - er,
Now he shines, the long - ex - pect - ed;



and that fu - ture years shall see ev - er - more and ev - er - more.
first re - vealed his sa - cred face ev - er - more and ev - er - more.
let cre - a - tion praise its Lord ev - er - more and ev - er - more.

Text: Aurelius Clemens Prudentius, 348–c. 413, abr.; tr. John Mason Neale, 1818–1866, alt.
Tune: plainsong, 13th cent.
Text and tune: Public domain

Stand

Lighting of the Christ candle as the following is read.

Narration: Eleanor

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth (John 1:1-5,9-14).

Narration: Emma

Are you looking for durable hope? Are you yearning for lasting peace? Do you want abiding joy? On this Christmas, be filled with the hope and the peace we have through the perfect and never-ending love of God in Jesus, our Savior. With joy, we say together with the psalmist:

All Children

I will sing of the Lord's great love forever; with my mouth I will make your faithfulness known through all generations (Psalm 89:1).

Prayer

Lord's Prayer

Blessing

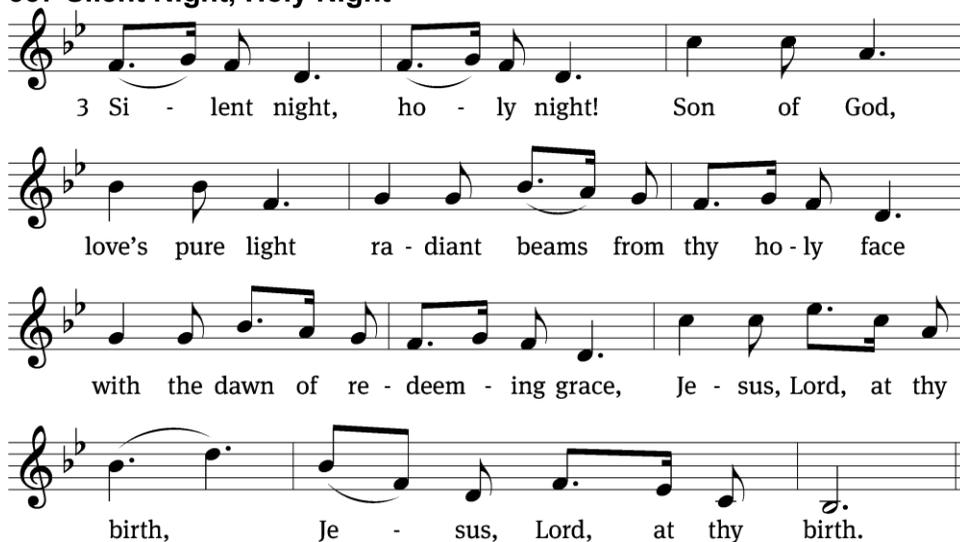
Be seated

Closing (Recessional) Hymn: "Silent Night, Holy Night" Children sing vv 1,2

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!

337 Silent Night, Holy Night



3 Si - lent night, ho - ly night! Son of God,
love's pure light ra - diant beams from thy ho - ly face
with the dawn of re - deem - ing grace, Je - sus, Lord, at thy
birth, Je - sus, Lord, at thy birth.

Text: Franz Joseph Mohr, 1792–1848; tr. John F. Young, 1820–1885
Tune: Franz Xaver Gruber, 1787–1863
Text and tune: Public domain