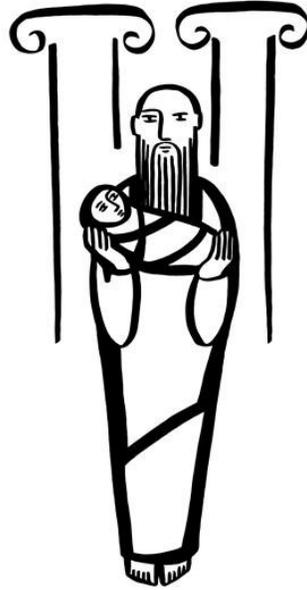


First Sunday of Christmas



The Lihu'e Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hawai'i

Ka Hale Pule 'O Na Lahui Apau . . .

Church Of All Peoples . . .

. . . Hele Pu Makou me Iesu Kristo

December 27, 2020

The Lihue Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hawai'i

4602 Ho'omana Road, Lihue, HI 96766

The Rev. JP Paxton

Rhonda Pabo, Organist Mele Brewer, Lector

Church: (808) 245-2145 Fax: (808) 246-8626

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Prayer Concerns

Please remember these people in your prayers during the week: David Gragg, Joe Morgan, Zosimo and Virginia Austria, Karen Kinoshita, Jake Whisenhunt, Rick Rentz, Stan Weeks, Judy Hoffman, Norman Dibble, Marie Johnson, Kazue Zaima, Virginia Hines-Aflague, John Mattek, Giraldo II (Bobby Giraldo's son), Kristie Schmid (Tony's sister), Lolli Hagen, Abraham Torres, Sr., Kristy Kahananui, Sonny Koerte, Mallory Rodriguez, Steve Schantz, Peter Alisna, Tirzah Pope, John McIntyre, Pastor Matthew Weber, Joyce Anglemeyer, Stephen Shioi, Peggy Hood, Jason Shimono, Richard Rasay, Nancy Nelson (formerly Mandell), Karen & Patrick Pavao, Edward Rasay, Karen Richards (friend of Nancy Mandell), Marcos Larson (Liedeke's son), Dora Jane Rowell, Franklin Parraga, Penny Parraga, Leticia Ancog (Kurt Javinar's sister), Yvonne Shinseki, Al Dressler (Larry's Father), Shirley Hallman (Denese Alcott's Mother), Mercy Ballesteros, Mike LaBerge, Anna Marie & Phil Croghan, Judy Carlson, Caroline Johnson, Sheila Belarmino, Ray Roderick, The Church Council, and leaders in the ELCA. If you have additional prayer requests, please let the church office know. "Ask it in my name . . ." Mahalo for your love.

Remembering Our Military

As we gather for worship, please remember those serving us in the military, and the families of our Hawai'i National Guard. These names have been given by loved ones and family members: Navy – TJ, Javinar, Kristian Matsumoto, Coast Guard - Brian Rodriguez, Navy - Kiana Alisna, Coast Guard - Ke'ale Renta Army - Jason Lumacad, Levi Fajardo: Air Force - Steven Javinar, Ikaika Fajardo, Army - Brandon Perkinson, Drew Cox, Tony Garton: National Guard - Benji MacKenzie, Eddie Resinto, Fred Casticimo, Philip Kamakea, Anthony Y. Torres, Master Sgt. If you know of someone you would like added to our prayer list, please advise the church office.

Introduction

"Rejoice always," begins the reading from 1 Thessalonians. Isaiah and the psalmist make clear that God is turning our mourning into laughter and shouts of joy. "All God's children got a robe," go the words of a spiritual. It is not so much a stately, formal, pressed outfit as it is a set of party clothes, clothes we are happy to wear. We receive that robe in baptism, and in worship we gather for a foretaste of God's party.

Welcome to Our Guests

It is always a joy to share our faith and worship with people visiting from around the world. Please know your presence and participation in our service is most appreciated. At Lihue Lutheran we celebrate Holy Communion at every service. You are certainly welcome in joining us as our Lord comes to us in this holy meal.

Introduction

The psalmist calls on the natural world, celestial bodies, fire and earth, creatures, and all humanity, to praise God. The voices of Simeon and 84-year-old Anna join the chorus today, recognizing what God is doing in Jesus. Simeon's song is often sung after communion, for we have seen God's salvation in the assembled community and have held Jesus in our hands in the bread. Then, like the prophet Anna, we tell of Jesus to all who look for the healing of the world.

Overview

Go in peace

With Simeon and Anna we receive consolation (Luke 2:25) and good news: Jesus frees us to go in peace. God's Word is incarnate, and we have seen the light of our salvation (2:29-32). "Go in peace" is our call to action—a reminder that we are freed from sin and death and sent out to share that good news with the world. "Go in peace" is also our prayer as life ends—a reminder of a love more powerful than death.

And yet . . . right along with these words of peace come troubling words from Simeon. The infant Jesus will be a source of turmoil for his people and his family. The words "and a sword will pierce your own soul too" (Luke 2:35) must have been the opposite of peaceful and comforting to young mother Mary. Luke even includes the detail that Mary and Joseph offered the least expensive purification sacrifice, a reminder that Jesus was born into poverty (Lev. 12:8). Even in the presence of God's incarnate peace, all is not well with the world.

This is where we enter the story, full of questions. How do we experience God's peace in our broken world? Faced with the reality of war, poverty, hunger, destruction, and loss, how do we speak of peace? How do we live God's peace in our lives? Like Simeon and Anna, we have faith in God's promise of peace because we have faith in the promiser. As Simeon and Anna witnessed, God's word has been, is, and will be fulfilled.

Theological reflection

The need for purification after childbirth may seem an outdated and irrelevant concept based in a negative, patriarchal shaming of women's bodies. Yet in Jewish tradition, defilement wasn't always a matter of coming into contact with something "impure." One could also be defiled by handling something holy, like sacred scriptures. (See Timothy H. Lim, "The Defilement of the Hands as a Principle Determining the Holiness of Scriptures," *The Journal of Theological Studies*, 61, no. 2 [October 2010], pp. 501–515.) Even though blood (especially menstrual blood) could be considered repugnant, blood could also be purifying; daubing blood on the altar or sprinkling it in the sanctuary cleansed ritual impurity.

Announcements and Weekly Events!

Announcements

1. Free Christmas Book – PDF downloadable on our website under the resources tab

The First Days of Jesus: The Story of the Incarnation

2. God's Grindz (Jan and Feb) & Mobile Muchies needs volunteers (Thursday AM)
3. Congratulations to Liedeke Bulder on her acceptance to the graduate training program with the Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation

Weekly Events

- ◇ Centering Prayer with Liedeke Bulder
Saturday, December 26, @ 9-10am via zoom <https://us04web.zoom.us/j/9079773456>
- ◇ Youth Group
Sunday, January 10, "Christ is born, so now what?" @ 5:30-7:00pm, Fellowship Hall
- ◇ Ghetto Sweet Tarts
Monday, January 11, "Epiphany: A New Realization" @ 5:30-7:00pm, Fellowship Hall
- ◇ BOBS Table Talk – Simply Wait: Cultivating Stillness in the Season of Advent
Tuesday, January 12, Ephesians @ 5:30-7:00pm, Conference Room, <https://zoom.us/j/91319975631>
- ◇ Women's Book Study – TBD
Wednesday, January 13 @ 7:30-8:30pm via zoom <https://zoom.us/j/96513446272>

First Sunday of Christmas

Order for Worship

Welcome, Check-In, and Announcements

Type into the Facebook chatbox and respond and say "Aloha!" to those joining us here locally and others from around the world!

Moment of Mindfulness

Take a moment to center your heart and prepare your heart for worship.

**Confession and Forgiveness*

P Trusting in the Word of Life given in Baptism, we are gathered in the name of the Father, Makua, and of the Son, Keiki Kane, and of the Holy Spirit, Uhane Hemolele.

C Amen

P Together, let us honestly and humbly confess that we have not lived as God desires.

Silence is kept for reflection.

Loving and forgiving God,

C we confess that we have sinned against you and our neighbors. We have turned away from your invitation to new life. We have turned away from the lowly and downtrodden. In your abundant mercy, forgive us our sins, those we know and those known only to you, for the sake of the one who came to live among us, Jesus Christ, our Savior. Amen.

P Hear the good news of peace and salvation. God forgives us all our sins, not through our own work, but through Jesus Christ, made known to all people. With all who come to the manger, rejoice in this amazing gift of grace.

C Amen

**Gathering Song*

Good Christian Friends, Rejoice

1 Good Chris-tian friends, re - jice with heart and soul and voice;
 2 Good Chris-tian friends, re - jice with heart and soul and voice;
 3 Good Chris-tian friends, re - jice with heart and soul and voice;

give ye heed to what we say: Je - sus Christ is born to - day;
 now ye hear of end - less bliss: Je - sus Christ was born for this!
 now ye need not fear the grave; Je - sus Christ was born to save!

ox and ass be - fore him bow, and he is in the man-ger now.
 He has o - pened heav-en's door, and we are blest for - ev - er - more.
 Calls you one and calls you all to gain the ev - er - last - ing hall.

Christ is born to - day! Christ is born to - day!
 Christ was born for this! Christ was born for this!
 Christ was born to save! Christ was born to save!

*The Apostolic Greeting

P The grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.

C **And also with you.**

*Song of Praise

Your Little Ones, Dear Lord

1 Your lit - tle ones, dear Lord, are we, and
2 With songs we has - ten you to greet, and
3 Oh, draw us whol - ly to you, Lord, and
4 Un - til at last we too pro - claim, with

come your low - ly bed to see; en - light - en ev - 'ry
kiss the ground be - fore your feet. Oh, bless - ed hour, oh,
to us all your grace ac - cord; true faith and love to
all your saints, your glo - rious name; in par - a - dise our

soul and mind, that we the way to you may find.
sweet-est night that gave you birth, our soul's de - light.
us im - part, that we may hold you in our heart.
songs re - new, and praise you as the an - gels do.

**Prayer of the Day*

P Almighty God, you wonderfully created the dignity of human nature and yet more wonderfully restored it. In your mercy, let us share the divine life of the one who came to share our humanity, Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C **Amen**

First Reading

Isaiah 61:10-62:3

To the people who returned to Jerusalem after the exile, the prophet proclaims that God's salvation will fully come to pass. Jerusalem will become a shining light to the nations and righteousness and praise will spring up as surely as the earth puts forth vegetation. forever. Centuries later, after the Babylonian exile, no king sat on the throne. Even then, however, the people of Israel remembered this promise and continued to hope for a king, the messiah, God's anointed.

¹Now when the king was settled in his house, and the LORD had given him rest from all his enemies around him, ²the king said to the prophet Nathan, "See now, I am living in a house of cedar, but the ark of God stays in a tent." ³Nathan said to the king, "Go, do all that you have in mind; for the LORD is with you."

⁴But that same night the word of the LORD came to Nathan: ⁵Go and tell my servant David: Thus says the LORD: Are you the one to build me a house to live in? ⁶I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent and a tabernacle. ⁷Wherever I have moved about

among all the people of Israel, did I ever speak a word with any of the tribal leaders of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, "Why have you not built me a house of cedar?" ⁸Now therefore thus you shall say to my servant David: Thus says the LORD of hosts: I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep to be prince over my people Israel; ⁹and I have been with you wherever you went, and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. ¹⁰And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may live in their own place, and be disturbed no more; and

A The Word of the Lord

C **Thanks be to God.**

Psalm

Psalm 148

The splendor of the LORD is over earth and heaven. (Ps. 148:13)

¹Hallelujah! Praise the LORD from the heavens;
 praise God in the heights.
²**Praise the LORD, all you angels;
 sing praise, all you hosts of heaven.**
³Praise the LORD, sun and moon;
 sing praise, all you shining stars.
⁴**Praise the LORD, heaven of heavens,
 and you waters above the heavens.**
⁵Let them praise the name of the LORD,
 who commanded, and they were created,
⁶**who made them stand fast forever and ever,
 giving them a law that shall not pass
 away.**
⁷Praise the LORD from the earth,
 you sea monsters and all deeps;
⁸**fire and hail, snow and fog,
 tempestuous wind, doing God's will;**

⁹mountains and all hills,
 fruit trees and all cedars;
¹⁰**wild beasts and all cattle,
 creeping things and flying birds;**
¹¹sovereigns of the earth and all peoples,
 princes and all rulers of the world;
¹²**young men and maidens,
 old and young together.**
¹³Let them praise the name of the LORD,
 whose name only is exalted, whose splendor
 is over earth and heaven.
¹⁴**The LORD has raised up strength for the
 people and praise for all faithful servants,
 the children of Israel, a people who are
 near the LORD. Hallelujah**

Second Reading

Galatians 4:4-7

Paul seeks to show the Galatians that the purpose of Christ's birth was to liberate us from the law's condemnation so that we would be fully adopted into God's family as beloved children.

⁴When the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, ⁵in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children. ⁶And

because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" ⁷So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God.

A The Word of the Lord

C Thanks be to God.

*The Gospel Acclamation

Refrain

Al-le - lu - ia, al-le - lu - ia, give thanks to the ris-en Lord;
 al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, give praise to his name.

*Holy Gospel

Luke 2:22-40

Luke's narrative continues with stories that emphasize Jesus' connection to Judaism. His family is devout in its observance of the law, and Jesus himself is recognized as one who will bring glory to Israel.

P The Holy Gospel according to Saint Luke, the second chapter.



²⁶In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, ²⁷to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." ²⁹But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. ³²He 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. ³³He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." ³⁴Mary said to

the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" ³⁵The 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. ³⁶And 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. ³⁷For nothing will be impossible with God." ³⁸Then 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.

P The Gospel of the Lord.

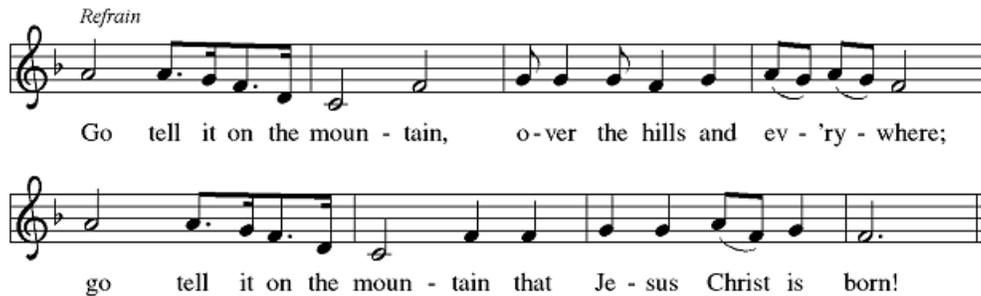


Keiki Sermon

Sermon

*Hymn of the Day

Go Tell It On The Mountain



1 While shep-herds kept their watch-ing o'er si - lent flocks by night,
 2 The shep-herds feared and trem-bled when, lo, a - bove the earth
 3 Down in a lone - ly man - ger the hum - ble Christ was born;

Refrain
 be - hold, through-out the heav-ens there shone a ho - ly light.
 rang out the an - gel cho-rus that hailed our Sav - ior's birth.
 and God sent us sal - va - tion that bless - ed Christ-mas morn.

**Apostles' Creed*

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

**The Prayers of the Church*

P Night and day, all creation praises you, O God. Strengthen your church across nations, denominations, and traditions. Fill us with wisdom and unify our proclamation of your forgiveness and mercy. Hear us, O God.

A All creation is holy to you, O God. You cause the earth to bring forth its shoots and gardens to spring up. Protect hibernating animals and frozen lands that wait earnestly for longer days of awakening and growth. Hear us, O God.

C **Your mercy is great.**

A The nations are upheld by your hand, O God. Cause righteousness and praise to spring forth, inspiring leaders to serve with compassion and integrity. Send your spirit of discernment upon legislators grappling with complex decisions for the sake of the common good. Hear us, O God.

C Your mercy is great.

A Send the spirit of your Son into our hearts, O God. Come quickly to hearts that race with fear, hearts that break with grief, and hearts that long for wholeness. Reveal your power to heal and to save. Hear us, O God.

C Your mercy is great.

A Adopt us into your family, O God. Bless our elders with the peace and joy of Simeon and Anna. Strengthen those who have retired, those who work in older age, and those in need of income, food, company, or health care. Connect young and old across generations. Hear us, O God.

C Your mercy is great.

A Let us depart in peace, O God, according to your word. For (*John, apostle and evangelist, and*) all your saints, we give you thanks. Prepare our salvation in the sight of all your witnesses of every time and place. Hear us, O God.

C Your mercy is great.

P God of mercy, come quickly to us with grace upon grace as we lift these and all our prayers to you, in the name of Jesus.

C Amen

*The Queen's Prayer

The musical score is for a piano accompaniment of a prayer. It is written in 4/4 time and consists of two systems of music. The first system is labeled 'Piano' and the second 'Pno'. The lyrics are written below the notes. The score begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The lyrics are: O kou a - lo - ha no A i - a i ka La - ni, A No - lai - la e ka - Haku Ma - la - lo kou e - he - u, Ko o kou oi - a i - o, He he - mo - le - le hoi ma - kou ma - lu - hi - a, A mau loa a - ku no. A - me - ne.

English Translation

1. O Lord thy Loving Mercy,
Is high as the Heavens.
It tells us of thy truth.
And 'tis filled with holiness

3. For thy grace I beseech thee.
Bring us 'neath thy protection.
And peace will be thy portion
Now and forever more. Amen

The Sharing of the Peace

P The peace of the Lord be with you always.

C And also with you.

P Let us share the peace of the Lord with those here locally and those joining us online via Facebook live!

Offertory Word

Dear friends, we invite you into a time of gifts, tithes, and offerings. If you are desire God in this season of Advent, and want to see God show up in your life, take a step of faith and considering giving today. Faith comes alive when it is put into action. May the joy of giving fill your heart, not out of duty or obligation but as the overflow of a worshipful heart that has tasted and seen the infinite worth of our Savior.

If God puts it on your heart to give, donations can be given here today, mailed in, or given online our website [here](#) or you can copy and paste the weblink below @

https://www.eservicepayments.com/cgi-bin/Vanco_ver3.vps?appver3=tYgT1GfNxRUldiimjHMvORYXmm3bazY6GfrmTtVDZydskSODEa-Up5lt373GHnco2evTpo0mld6BrVzd2nG0p8xSFKZ9u6c4AzLo4CjNx7k=&ver=3

Offertory Response

Lord of Aloha

God of the is - lands, Lord of the seas, Ma - ker of beau - ty and source of the breeze,
5
King of Cre - a - tion, an - cient and new, Lord of A - lo - ha we wor - ship you.

9

 Auth-or of mer-cy, Giv-er of grace, Bles-sed Re-deem-er who died in our place, Fath-er of one O

14

 ha-na are you, Lift-ing our voic-es we sing "Al-le-lu" Lord of A-lo-ha we wor-ship you.

19

 God of the is-lands, Lord of the seas, Ma-ker of beau-ty and source of the breeze,

23

 King of Cre-a-tion, an-cient and new, Lord of A-lo-ha we wor-ship you.

27

 Lord of A-lo-ha we wor-ship you.

**Offertory Prayer*

P Let us pray. Gracious God, you came to us as one unknown, bringing joy and salvation to the earth. Nourish us at your banquet table, that with all who welcome your birth we may proclaim your peace, revealed in Jesus Christ, our Savior.

C Amen

Invitation to Communion

The Word is revealed in a manger, in simply bread and wine. Come meet Christ in this meal.

**The Words of Institution*

(All are welcome to share in this meal with us. The sacraments are provided in accordance to synodical guidelines in collaboration with CDC, state, and local precautions. If you do not have sacraments, please raise your hand and an usher will bring them to you.)

**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.

****The Blessing***

P The body and blood of our Lord and Savior, Jesus the Christ, strengthen you and keep you in his grace.

C Amen.

P Almighty God, who sent the Holy Spirit to Mary, proclaimed joy through the angels, sent the shepherds with good news, and led the magi by a star, bless you this day through the Word made flesh.

C Amen.

****The Post Communion Prayer***

P Let us pray. Gracious and abundant God, you have done great things for us, and we rejoice. In this bread and cup you give us life forever. In your boundless mercy, strengthen us and open our hearts to the world's needs, for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Lord.

C Amen.

****The Benediction***

P The Lord bless you and keep you, the Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord look upon you with favor and give you peace in the name of Makua, Keiki Kane, and Uhane Hemolele

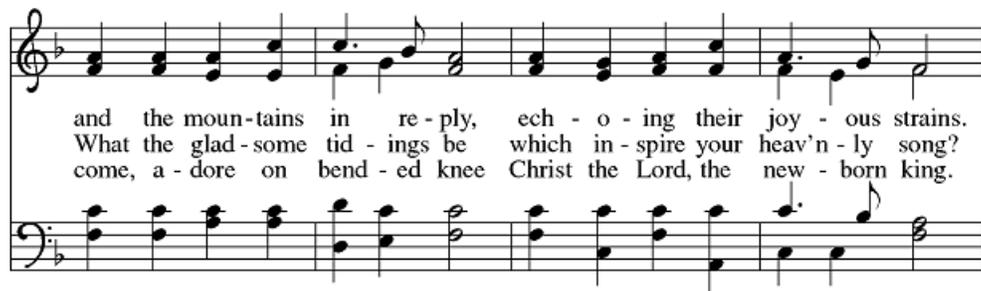
C Amen.

****The Sending Song***

Angels We Have Heard On High

1 An - gels we have heard on high, sweet - ly sing - ing o'er the plains,
2 Shep - herds, why this ju - bi - lee? Why your joy - ous strains pro - long?
3 Come to Beth - le - hem and see him whose birth the an - gels sing;

The image shows a musical score for the hymn 'Angels We Have Heard On High'. It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff at the top and a bass clef staff at the bottom. The treble staff contains the melody with lyrics underneath. The bass staff contains a harmonic accompaniment. The lyrics are: '1 An - gels we have heard on high, sweet - ly sing - ing o'er the plains, 2 Shep - herds, why this ju - bi - lee? Why your joy - ous strains pro - long? 3 Come to Beth - le - hem and see him whose birth the an - gels sing;'. The music is in a common time signature and a key signature of one flat (B-flat).

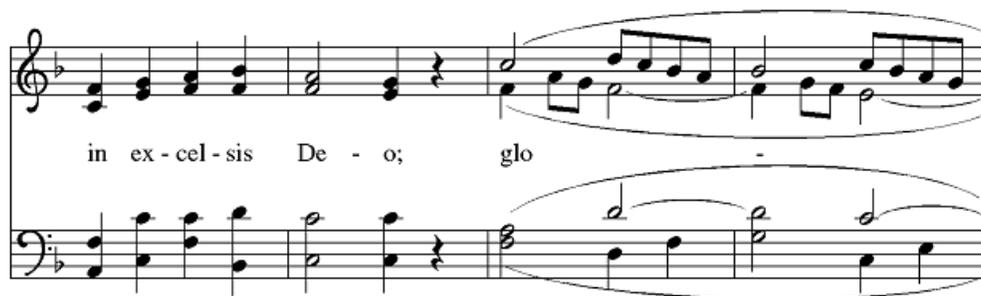


and the moun-tains in re-ply, ech-o-ing their joy-ous strains.
 What the glad-some tid-ings be which in-spire your heav'n-ly song?
 come, a-dore on bend-ed knee Christ the Lord, the new-born king.



Refrain

Glo - ri - a



in ex-cel-sis De-o; glo



ri-a in ex-cel-sis De-o.

Dismissal

P Go in peace, share the gift of Jesus! **C** **Thanks be to God!**

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Upcoming Commemorations

John, Apostle and Evangelist

Sunday, December 27, 2020

The son of Zebedee and brother of James, John was one of the twelve disciples and witness to the transfiguration. Tradition has named him also the writer of the Gospel of John, the three New Testament letters bearing his name, as well as Revelation.

The Holy Innocents, Martyrs

Monday, December 28, 2020

This day commemorates the young children killed by Herod in Bethlehem in his jealous attempt to murder the baby Jesus, a sobering reminder of the evil that led Christ to be born for our salvation.

Name of Jesus

Friday, January 1, 2021

By Jewish law, every baby boy was circumcised and named on the eighth day of life, so on the eighth day of Christmas the church celebrates this event in Jesus' life. The keeping of the covenant as well as Jesus' name are signs of God's salvation given to us through him.

Johann Konrad Wilhelm Loehle, renewer of the church, died 1872

Saturday, January 2, 2021

A nineteenth-century German Lutheran pastor, Loehle worked to enliven the church with the eucharist at its center, from which would flow evangelism and social ministry. He sent pastors to North America, Australia, New Guinea, Brazil, and the Ukraine.

So Now What?

Christ is born.....so now what? The season has ended and we might find ourselves cleaning the house, putting away the tree, taking down the decorations, and saying “goodbye” to family (if we spent time with family for the holidays). Is it the end or is it just the beginning?

If we take a look at Simeon and Anna in our Gospel lesson, this appears to be the beginning of something new, the start of something great. Their eyes had seen the salvation of God and they weren't the same anymore. Their hearts were filled with joy.

How about us? Now that Christmas has come and gone, are we any different? Did we take time to “come and see”? Did we get to experience Christ, or were we too busy with the hustle and bustle, the stress and mess of the season? Did anything change in us? Did we fall more in love with Jesus and see His value and infinite worth in and over our lives?

I keep coming back to the story of Mary and Martha. One chose to sit and enjoy Jesus while the other one got caught up with all of the work, and the expectations and customs of life. Here, we see two new characters who refresh our image of enjoying Jesus in Simeon and Anna who receive the Christ-child with open arms and rejoice.

The timeless message of the Gospel is that it is *never too late* to start over or begin again. At any point in time, we can come back to the manger where the living Christ will greet us and fill our hearts with joy. Like the waters of Baptism, we can always return to the place where it all began to behold, with wonder, the immense reality of God becoming a man and dwelling among us.

We are no longer alone. We no longer wander or wait. Christ is here, today, alive and living. Behold, believe, be filled with this blessing.