



*Loved by God,  
Sent to Serve.*

**1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Christmas  
December 31, 2023**

**Evangelical Lutheran Worship**  
How Does a Weary World Rejoice? © A Sanctified Art

**GATHERING**

*The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God.*

**Prelude**

**Call to Worship**

Every year we celebrate Christmas. Every week we break bread. Every week we gather for worship. Every day we count our blessings. Every minute God is near. Yes, every minute God is near. These are the rituals of our faith. Let us worship Holy God.

**Confession and Forgiveness**

Church family, our faith is decorated with rituals and rhythms that help tie us to God. Confession is one of those rituals. Every week we gather in this space and tell the truth about our lives. And every week God hears our prayers and offers us grace. This holy dance of confession and mercy is one of the many rituals I could not live without. So let us embrace this holy tradition together. Let us pray:

**God of rhythms, we confess our faith would not be what it is without rituals. Unlike you, we depend on bread and water. We have to return to this space again and again to hear old, familiar stories. For if we stopped, we know it would not take long before we lost our way. Forgive us for our fragility, and thank you for giving us ordinary rituals and rhythms to hold onto. With grateful and humble hearts we pray, amen.**

Friends, it is not enough to hear once a month or once a year that you are forgiven. We need to hear it every single week. Every single week we need to be reminded that we are held in God's loving embrace.

So hear this good news: no matter where you are on your journey of life, love, or faith, and no matter what you have done or left undone, you belong to God. You are claimed. You are known. You are forgiven. This is the good news of the gospel!

Thanks be to God!

**Amen!**

## Prayer of the Day

Gracious God, when our world turns upside down or when the road ahead is unclear, we return to ritual. We come to the sanctuary. We break bread at table. We pour water. We greet one another as family. And we listen to your Word. Today we pray—meet us in this moment. Meet us in these rituals that anchor us and speak a word of hope. We are listening. We are drawing near. We are seeking you.

**Amen.**

## Lessons and Carols

**Isaiah 9:2-7** *God promises a king*

*Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming* v. 1

ELW 272

**Micah 5:2-5a** *The king will come from Bethlehem*

*O Little Town of Bethlehem* vs. 1 & 4

ELW 279

**Luke 1:26-35, 38** *The annunciation to Mary*

*The Angel Gabriel from Heaven Came* v. 1

ELW 265

**Luke 2:1-7** *The birth of Jesus*

*Infant Holy, Infant Lowly* vs. 1 & 2

ELW 276

**Luke 2:8-16** *The shepherds go to see the Savior*

*Angels, from the Realms of Glory* vs. 1 & 2

ELW 275

**Matthew 2:1-11** *The magi follow the star*

*The First Noel* vs. 1 & 5

ELW 300

## Affirmation of Faith

Let us profess our faith together:

**We believe that faith is a journey marked by rituals and rhythms. We come to worship. We confess our sins. We pass the peace. We offer grace. We hear the Word. We baptize children. We break the bread. And we tell the story of a loving God. And through these sacred rituals, we are reminded: we are not alone. God is near, and we have work to do. May this belief shape the rhythm of our lives.**

**Amen.**

## Prayers of Intercession

...Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**  
...according to your abundant grace. **Amen.**

## Sharing of the Peace

The peace of the Lord be with you always.  
**And also with you.**

## MEAL

*God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ.*

## Offertory

### Offering Prayer

(inspired by Matthew 14:15-21)

Let us pray together,

**On my own, what I have to give doesn't amount to much in the light of all you have given to me and in the face of so much need.**

**Put together as a congregation, what we offer you here in love becomes more, not simply added together, but somehow multiplied in its usefulness.**

**We ask you to bless our gifts and with the addition of your blessing, just as it was with the loaves and fishes, there is enough for all.**

**Amen**

~ from the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand website. <http://www.presbyterian.org.nz/>

## Thanksgiving

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts. **We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. **It is right to give God thanks and praise.**

## Words of Institution

### Lord's Prayer

*Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us.*

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.

## **Invitation to Communion**

**Communion Hymn: *Of the Father's Love Begotten***  
*(Please refer to hymnal)*

**ELW 295**

## **Post-Communion Prayer**

### **Prayer of Thanksgiving**

Holy, gracious, God, Here at this table your promise of life is made tangible.  
**We have rested in the depth of your love;**  
**We have tasted your nourishing, nurturing presence;**  
**We accept you into our bodies, into our lives.**  
**Together, at this table, you have offered us life.**  
**Together, by your grace, we accept the life you offer.**  
**And we give you thanks. Amen.**

~ posted on Joanna Harader on her **Spacious Faith** blog. <http://spaciousfaith.com/>

## **SENDING**

*God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world.*

## **Announcements**

### **Benediction**

Family of faith, as you leave this place, you go into a weary world —  
so speak tenderly. Do the good that is yours to do. Choose connection.  
Hold onto hope. And remember that Christ took on flesh for you.  
You are God's beloved. So go rejoicing. The world needs it.  
In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.  
**Amen.**

**Sending Song: *O Come, All Ye Faithful***

**ELW 283**

## **Dismissal**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

## **Postlude**

### **Announcements**

**Thank you to the following for providing the Poinsettias to beautify our sanctuary:**

Mike & Stephanie Ackerman in memory of Nick & Anita Ackerman, in honor of  
Brad Lobberecht

Craig & Joan Cram in honor of our family

Kevin & Kris Erickson Eipperle in memory of Verdon Erickson & Marvalee  
Eipperle

Kurt & Susan Hansen in memory of our parents

Steve & Sandy Heer in honor of God's creation

Barb Lindecker (2) in memory of my parents Alice & Leonard

Galen & Debbie Thomas in memory of our parents & grandparents

Dale & Jan Helwig-Schrobilgen in memory of our parents & family members

Val & Morgan Kennedy/Alan & Bri Ensign in memory of Janet Grimm & Jack  
Kennedy

Larry & Barb Croghan in memory of our parents

Betty Westemeier in memory of Daniel Westemeier

Stephen Geisert in memory of Janel Geisert

Jill Klinebriel in memory of Wayne Asmus

Phil & Peggy Granovsky in celebration of Christ's birth

## **This Week at Lord of Life**

Sunday, December 31      10:30 AM    Worship in-person or online

Monday, January 1      OFFICE CLOSED

## **Prayer List**

Tim & Heather Felderman and family

Phyllis Fishnick

Nate & Diane Frambach

Lois Freiburger

Pat Friedman

Sally Fuller

Steve Geisert

Thank you for your continued support of the ministries of  
Lord of Life Lutheran Church. Scan the code to reach our  
website for further information.





## Acknowledgments

**Cover Art: “Revelation”** by Lisle Gwynn Garrity

| A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org Inspired by Luke 2:21-38

*Acrylic painting on canvas with digital drawing*

I wonder what Mary and Joseph expect when they enter the temple to dedicate their newborn son. This customary ritual quickly unravels into an astonishing scene. A stranger named Simeon pronounces Jesus to be a “light” and “revelation,” and his dying wish is fulfilled. A prophet named Anna also draws near to the child, praising God for the redemption he will bring.

Simeon and Anna’s words fill Mary and Joseph with amazement. But that can’t be the only emotion taking up space in the room. For Simeon turns to Mary, perhaps privately, to continue sharing his message: the boy will also become the cause of great turmoil, the catalyst for opposition. He will expose the inner thoughts of many. A sword will pierce her innermost being. The mother of God will grieve as she bears witness to the suffering of the child she birthed.

In this image, Simeon bestows his blessing and prophecy with the urgency of a man desperate to say everything that needs to be said before his time runs out. Anna looks off into the distance, as if peering into the future. Her devotion to God over the years has sharpened her gaze; she knows redemption when she sees it.

In the top left, I depicted Jesus’ hand being cradled by the hands of his parents. This tender moment is frozen in time, like a Polaroid photograph placed in a scrapbook. Mary and Joseph treasure their child as they receive the fullness of his calling. I imagine them memorizing each wrinkle and tiny fingernail, treasuring the smallness of a hand that will one day become a strong fist, fighting for justice for the oppressed and liberation for those held captive. —Rev. Lisle Gwynn Garrity

Worship materials created with A Sanctified Art “How Does a Weary World Rejoice?” © A SANCTIFIED ART LLC | SANCTIFIEDART.ORG

Liturgy by Rev. Sarah Speed A SANCTIFIED ART LLC | SANCTIFIEDART.ORG

Other liturgical elements provided as noted.

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