



Central Lutheran Church

Christmas Eve
December 24, 2023

Rev. Veronika Czutor, Pastor
Harold Knight, PhD, Music Director
Rachel Brown, Administrative Assistant

Central Lutheran Church, ELCA

1000 Easton Rd., Dallas, Texas

God calls us to proclaim the Gospel and demonstrate Christ's love for all.

Please turn off your cell phone.

This service is being livestreamed to our neighbors near and far on Facebook.

Most of the sanctuary- including all leaders and worshippers- is on camera.

BELL PEAL (7:00 pm)

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRELUDE on “Good Christian Friends Rejoice”

CHRISTMAS DIALOGUE

Jesus Christ is the Light of the world!

He is the Light no darkness can overcome.

At darkest night we gather to celebrate the great light of our salvation.

With the heavenly host we sing, “Glory to God in the highest heaven.”

In Christ, God's Word is made flesh and lives among us.

With the shepherds, we will tell of the wonders we have seen and heard.

BRIEF ORDER FOR CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

In the name of the Father, and of the ✝ Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

The assembly kneels or sits. Silence is kept for reflection.

We confess our sin before you.

We replace compassion with competition.

We seek what is mighty while ignoring the meek.

We are quick to anger but slow to forgive.

We have not put on love in harmony with you.

Wrap us in the grace of your powerful Word.

Swaddle our hearts with your peace,

**That all we do, in word or deed, may reflect your love born among us.
Amen.**

I bring you good news of great joy for all people; God has come among us. In the child born of Mary, Christ the Lord. ✝ In Christ your sins are forgiven.
Amen

The assembly stands

ENTRANCE HYMN

ELW 257

- 1 O come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here until the Son of God appear.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel.
- 2 O come, O Wisdom from on high, embracing all things far and nigh:
In strength and beauty come and stay; teach us your will and guide our way.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel.
- 5 O come, O Key of David come, and open wide our heav'nly home;
Make safe the way that leads on high, and close the path to misery.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel.
- 6 O come, O Dayspring, come and cheer; O Sun of justice, now draw near
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night, and death's dark shadow put to flight.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel.

LIGHTING OF THE FOURTH ADVENT WREATH CANDLE

Praise to you, O God, who lives with us, sharing our flesh and bones. As Mary waited and Joseph dreamed, so we wait and dream for you. Bless us and let your face shine upon us, more radiant than these candles, and more dear than all else we seek. Restore us when we fail to refuse the evil and choose the good, and banish all our fears. We pray in the name of Emmanuel, your promised child and our Savior.
Amen.

CHORAL INTROIT: "Still, Still, Still"

GREETING

May the grace and truth of Christ be with you.

And also with you.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Let us pray.

A brief silence is kept before the prayer.

Almighty God, you made this holy night shine with the brightness of the true Light. Grant that here on earth we may walk in the light of Jesus' presence and in the last day wake to the brightness of his glory; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

HYMN OF PRAISE

ELW 283

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!

The highest, most holy, light of light eternal,

born of a virgin, a mortal he comes;

Son of the Father now in flesh appearing! *Refrain*

Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation,

sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!

Glory to God in the highest *Refrain*

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*

FIRST LESSON: Isaiah 9:2-7

²The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness— on them light has shined. ³You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as people exult when dividing plunder. ⁴For the yoke of their burden, and the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian. ⁵For all the boots of the tramping warriors and all the garments rolled in blood shall be burned as fuel for the fire. ⁶For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onward and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

L Word of God, Word of Life

C Thanks be to God

GRADUAL HYMN

ELW 268

- 1 From heav'n above to earth I come to bear good news to ev'ry home!
Glad tidings of great joy I bring to all the world and gladly sing.:
- 2 To you this night is born a child of Mary, chosen virgin mild;
This newborn child of lowly birth shall be the joy of all the earth.
- 5 These are the signs that you will see to let you know that it is he:
In manger-bed, in swaddling clothes the child who all the earth upholds.

SECOND LESSON: Titus 2:11-14

¹¹The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all, ¹²training us to renounce impiety and worldly passions, and in the present age to live lives that are self-controlled, upright, and godly, ¹³while we wait for the blessed hope and the manifestation of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. ¹⁴He it is who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds.

L Word of God, Word of Life

C Thanks be to God

WELCOMING THE GOSPEL

ELW 268

6 Now let us all with joyful cheer go with the shepherds and draw near
To see this wondrous gift of God, the blessed child to us bestowed.

READING OF THE GOSPEL: Luke 2:1-20

*A call and response between the reader and the assembly is placed throughout the gospel reading. Each time the reader announces To us is born a Savior, the assembly responds: **Jesus Christ our Lord.***

Our Christmas Eve story comes from the Gospel of Luke.

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. To us is born a Savior.

Jesus Christ our Lord.

Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. To us is born a Savior.

Jesus Christ our Lord.

While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. To us is born a Savior.

Jesus Christ our Lord.

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. To us is born a Savior.

Jesus Christ our Lord.

But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see. I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." To us is born a Savior.

Jesus Christ our Lord.

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!” To us is born a Savior.

Jesus Christ our Lord.

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.” So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. To us is born a Savior.

Jesus Christ our Lord.

When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. To us is born a Savior.

Jesus Christ our Lord.

The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them. To us is born a Savior.

Jesus Christ our Lord.

SERMON

Pastor Veronika

Silence for reflection follows the sermon.

HYMN OF THE DAY

ELW 265

The angel Gabriel from heaven came, with wings as drifted snow, with eyes as flame
All hail to thee, O lowly maiden Mary, most highly favored lady. Gloria!

For know a blessed mother thou shalt be, all generations laud and honor thee;
Thy son shall be Emmanuel by seers foretold, most highly favored lady. Gloria!

Then gentle Mary meekly bowed her head; To me be as it pleaseth God, she said.
My soul shall laud and magnify God’s holy name. Most highly favored lady. Gloria!

Of her, Emmanuel, the Christ, was born in Bethlehem all on a Christmas morn,
And Christian folk throughout the world will ever say: most highly favored lady.
Gloria!

NICENE CREED

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation, he came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary, and became truly human. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate. He suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come.

Amen.

THE PRAYERS

Let us pray for the whole people of God in Christ Jesus, and for all people according to their needs.

Please sit or kneel for prayer.

The response to each spoken petition is:

P Merciful God

C Receive our prayer.

People with prayer needs: **Lydia** Landfair, **Selena** Dybdahl, **Paul** Chambers, **Eloy** Aguirre, **Robin** Holland, and **Ruth** Steiner.

The prayers conclude:

P ...through your son Jesus Christ, our Lord

C Amen.

THE PEACE

The peace we share is a sign of God's mission of reconciliation among us and the reconciliation we have with one another in Christ Jesus. Please offer a symbol of reconciliation to one another.

P The peace of the Lord be with you always.

C And also with you.

THE OFFERING

*We give thanks for what God has first given us. Our ministry to the people of East Dallas is supported by your offering. An offering plate is available in the narthex after worship. You may also use our online giving through **Vanco, PayPal, or Givelify** (available in the App Store) or continue to mail your offerings to our office.*

MUSICAL OFFERING: "Where Shepherd Lately Knelt"

Sung by the choir.

Where shepherds lately knelt and kept the angel's word, I come in half-belief, a pilgrim strangely stirred; But there is room and welcome there for me, But there is room and welcome there for me.

In that unlikely place I find him as they said: Sweet newborn Babe, how frail! And in a manger bed A still, small voice to cry one day for me, A still, small voice to cry one day for me.

How should I not have known Isaiah would be there, His prophecies fulfilled? With pounding heart I stare: A child, a son, the Prince of Peace for me, A child, a son, the Prince of Peace for me.

Can I, will I forget how Love was born, and burned Its way into my heart—unasked, unforced, unearned, To die, to live, and not alone for me, To die, to live, and not alone for me?

OFFERING PRAYER

Let us pray. God of abundance, receive and bless these gifts we have offered. Join our hearts with the song of the angels, and gather us at your table of celebration. Strengthen us to share with all the world the abundance of your grace upon grace, poured out in Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh.
Amen.

THE GREAT 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 our thanks and praise.

PREFACE

It is indeed our duty and our joy . . . we praise your name and join their unending hymn:


SANCTUS



♩ Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, Lord God of pow'r and might:



Heav'n and earth are full of your glo - ry.



Ho - san - na in the high - est. Bless - ed is he who comes



in the name of the Lord. Ho - san - na in the high - est.

EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER AND WORDS OF INSTITUTION

Holy One...Let us proclaim the mystery of faith:

Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

With this bread and cup we remember your Word dwelling among us, full of grace and truth. We remember our new birth in his death and resurrection. We look with hope for his coming.

Come, Lord Jesus.

Holy God, we long for your Spirit. Come among us. Bless this meal. May your Word take flesh in us. Awaken your people. Fill us with your light. Bring the gift of peace on earth.

Come, Holy Spirit.

All praise and glory are yours, Holy One of Israel, Word of God incarnate, Power of the Most High, 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.

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

P: Glory to God in the highest! Come to the table of peace.

C: Thanks be to God

LAMB OF GOD



☐ Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the world; have mer-cy on us.



Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the world; have mer-cy on us.



Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the world;



grant us peace, grant us peace.

DISTRIBUTION OF COMMUNION

Communion will be served at the altar rail, and you have the option to kneel or stand. The consecrated host will be immersed in the chalice and then placed in your hand. If your preference is to receive only the host, please communicate that to the ministers. We have gluten-free options available. Alternatively, if you'd prefer a blessing, simply fold your arms in front of your chest. Currently, there is no consecrated grape juice available.

The body of Christ, given for you.

The blood of Christ, shed for you.

Amen.

MUSICAL MEDITATION: “Jesus, Jesus, Rest Your Head”

Sung by the choir.

Jesus, Jesus, rest your head. You have got a manger bed.

All the evil folk on earth, Sleep in feathers at their birth.

Jesus, Jesus, rest your head. You have got a manger bed.

*Have you heard about our Jesus? Have you heard about his fate?
How his mother came to the stable, On that Christmas Eve so late?
Winds were blowing. Cows were lowing. Stars were glowing, glowing, glowing
Jesus, Jesus, rest your head. You have got a manger bed.*

*To the manger came the Wise Men. Bringing from hin and yon,
For the mother and the father, And the blessed little Son.
Shepherds left their fields and flocks And sat beside the ass and ox.*

*Jesus, Jesus, rest your head. You have got a manger bed.
All the evil folk on earth, Sleep in feathers at their birth.
Jesus, Jesus, rest your head. You have got a manger bed.*

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Let us pray.

God our redeemer, you have fed us at this table with gifts of grace, truth, and life. As you have gathered us in joy, send us forth as messengers of your peace. Make us shine with the good news of your glory, born to us in Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

SERVICE OF LIGHTS

As we sing our final carols, Pastor Veronika and the worship assistants will receive the light from the Christ Candle. They will share their light with those at the end of each pew. Please pass the light to those next to you. Do not tilt the lit candle. Hold the lit candle upright and tilt only the unlit candle to receive the light.

PEACE, PEACE, PEACE

Sung by the Choir

Peace, peace, peace on earth and goodwill to all. This is a time for joy, this is a time for love. Now let us all sing together of peace, peace, peace on earth.

SILENT NIGHT

Sung by All

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.

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!

Silent night, holy night! Son of God, love's pure light radiant beams from your holy
face, with the dawn of redeeming grace, Jesus, Lord, at your birth; Jesus, Lord, at
your birth.

BLESSING

God bless you and keep you, † Jesus grant you grace and truth, and the Spirit send
peace upon your hearts, now and forever.

Amen.

SENDING HYMN

ELW 289

Angels we have heard on high, sweetly singing o'er the plains,
And the mountains in reply, echoing their joyous strains.
Gloria in excelsis Deo; gloria in excelsis Deo.

Shepherds, why this jubilee? Why your joyous strains prolong?
What the gladsome tidings be which inspire your heav'nly song?
Gloria in excelsis Deo; gloria in excelsis Deo.

Come to Bethlehem and see him whose birth the angels sing;
Come adore on bended knee Christ the Lord, the newborn king.
Gloria in excelsis Deo; gloria in excelsis Deo.

DISMISSAL

Christ the Savior is born! Go in peace. Proclaim this good news.
Thanks be to God.

Acknowledgments:

Liturgy from sundaysandseasons.com. Copyright © 2023 Augsburg Fortress. All rights reserved.

Prelude: *Good Christian Friends Rejoice*

Tune: J.S. Bach

Entrance Hymn: *O come, O come, Emmanuel*

Text: *Psalterium Cantonium Catholicarum*, Köln, 1710; tr. composite

Music: French processional, 15th cent.

Text sts. 2, 6, 7 © 1997 Augsburg Fortress

Choral Introit: *Still, Still, Still*

Music: arr. Robert Wetzler, 1932

Hymn of Praise: *O Come All Ye Faithful*

Text: attr. John Francis Wade, 1711-1786; tr. Frederick Oakeley, 1802-1880, sts. 1, 3-4; tr. unknown, st. 2

Gradual Hymn/ Welcoming the Gospel: *From Heaven Above*

Text: Martin Luther, 1483-1546; tr. Lutheran Book or Worship

Music: attr. Martin Luther; V. Schumann, *Geistliche Lieder*, 1539

Text © 1978 *Lutheran Book or Worship* admin. Augsburg Fortress

Hymn of the Day: *The Angel Gabriel from Heaven Came*

Text: Basque carol; para. Sabine Baring-Gould, 1834-1924

Music: Basque carol; arr. C. Edgar Pettman, 1865-1943, and John Wickham

Arr. © 1955, 1983 E.H. Freeman, Ltd, admin. Glenwood Music Corp.

Musical Offering: *Where Shepherds Lately Knelt*

Music and Text: Carl Schalk

Musical Meditation: *Jesus, Jesus, Rest Your Head*

Music and Text: Trad. American Carol, arr. Dale Grotenhuis

Service of Lights: *Silent Night*

Text: Joseph Mohr, 1792-1849; tr. John F. Young, 1820-1885

Sending Hymn: *Angels We Have Heard on High*

Text: French carol; tr. H.F. Henry, *The Crown of Jesus Music*, 1864

Music: French carol; arr. Edward S. Barnes, 1887-1958

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Visitors, we are glad to have you with us and invite you to come again!

Church Office Hours: Monday – Friday 10 am - 2 pm

Pastor Veronika will be out of town from December 30-January 12. Should you need pastoral care during this time, please contact the following:

Dec 30, 2023-Jan 4, 2024

Pastor Rachel Ringlaben (Emanuel Lutheran Church, Dallas, TX)
email: rachel.ringlaben@emanueldallas.org
cell: 501-944-1277

Jan 5, 2024 - Jan 12

Pastor Tom Schwolert (Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, Garland, TX)
email: pastor@gloriadeigarland.org
cell: 214-995-1720

Serving in Worship today: Greeters: Judy & Katherine Koble; Ushers: Mary & Joel Glenn; Lector: Ted Steinke; Communion Assistants: Sara Jutton & Anne Monson; Candlebearer: Alden Barse; and Crossbearer: Wyatt Pearson.

Caring & Sharing is moving to the last Sunday of the month. On December 31 at 9:00 am we will send cards to people with anniversaries and birthdays in January. Then, on January 28 we will meet again to send cards for February, etc. There will be breakfast treats and coffee for everyone. See you there!

Service of Lessons & Carols: As we bid farewell to the year and celebrate the joy of the Christmas season, you're invited to a special Service of Lessons and Carols on **December 31 at 10:30 am.** Immerse yourself in the spirit of the season with uplifting readings from the Bible and the joyous melodies of Christmas hymns. We will not celebrate Holy Communion but will focus on the rich tapestry of lessons and carols that resonate with the Christmas story. All are warmly welcome!

Sunday School & Lunch: We have once-a-month "Sunday School" for all ages. Join us for a lunch and discussion of the Bible and our Lutheran heritage. Our first meeting of 2024 will be on Sunday, **January 7, after the worship service.** For lunch, we will have hot dogs, brats, salad, and peanut butter sandwiches. **We are looking for volunteers to bring food.** See the Count-me-in sheet in the narthex to sign up to bring something. Come join the fellowship and ministry together! All are welcome!

Thank You to everyone who helped to decorate our sanctuary for the Christmas season. Your labors are greatly appreciated. A special thank you to Bruce and Jean Staffeld for sharing their family's Christmas altar banner.

<h2>Central Lutheran Church</h2> <hr/>  <p>Evangelical Lutheran Church in America</p>	
<p>Pastor: The Rev. Veronika Czutor 972-904-0245 reverend.veronika@gmail.com</p> <p>Music Director: Harold Knight, PhD harchiek74@gmail.com</p> <p>Administrative Assistant: Rachel Brown 214-327-2222 central.lutheran.dallas@gmail.com</p>	<p>1000 Easton Rd. Dallas, TX 75218</p> <p>www.CentralLutheran.org</p> <p>www.facebook.com/Central LutheranDallas</p>

Thank you for the lovely poinsettias given by the following:

Lisa, Isabelle, & Alden Barse	In honor of Marian Morgan In memory of Geneva & Bob Barse
Carole Bawcum	In honor of my beloved daughter, Carrie Enocksen In memory of my parents, Pete & Minnie James
Amy & David Brown	In memory of Bob & Jan Davis; Willie Mae Rowell; Mary & Jack Haynie; and Margaret Frost
Mark Buie	In memory of Patricia Buie
Mary Ann Childs	In memory of Ed Childs
Charlotte Danielson	In memory of Erwin & George Danielson
Harold & Cathy Jones	In memory of Grace & Gene Jones; Alf & Catherine Carlson; Peggy Hanson, and Ed Carlson
Steve & Laura Haynie	In memory of Mary Haynie and the Hansen sisters
Sara Jutton	In memory of my parents and grandparents
Judy & Katherine Koble	In memory of Katherine Emmert
Meredith Lopez	In memory of Jay Morrison
Mark & Jan Moody	In memory of our parents and grandparents
Nancy Nulisch	In memory of loved ones
David & Alesia Pearson	To the Glory of God
Myke Riley	In memory of my husband, parents, and brother
John Sanders	In memory of Norma
Lionel & Patsy Schoen	In memory of our parents
Bruce & Jean Staffeld	In honor of Maverick Nixon In gratitude for our family
Ted Steinke	In memory of Ted & Helen Steinke, Joann & Mac McRae, and Aunt Jane Gibbon
Gary & Chrissy Townsley	In honor of Lillian Townsley
Ed & Ylva Wolfgang	In honor of our grandchildren In memory of our parents
Reinhard & Lori Ziegler	In honor of Helen Lovelace In memory of Ruth Ziegler



Scan this QR code (or go to linktr.ee/centrallutheranchurch) to connect with us, join our mailing list, or donate online.

Our Prayer List: Please submit your prayer requests to the church office via email (central.lutheran.dallas@gmail.com) or via phone (214-327-2222).

PRAYERS FOR HEALING & COMFORT

For healing

Ruth & Eddie Steiner

Charlotte Breedlove

Irisz Gonda

Tracee Bond

Paula & Robin Holland

Michael DuCote

Eloy Aguirre

Selena Dybdahl

Relationship

Sister & Brother-in-law of Susan

Wrobbel and Judy Koble

Neighbor of Harold Jones

Friend of Pastor Veronika

Friend of Charlotte Danielson

Friends of Anne Monson

Friend of Rachel Brown

Friend of Pastor Veronika

Sister of Mary Glenn

Church Members

Lydia Landfair

Don Smith

Mario Montejo

Kris McDowell

Yuvonne Muirhead

Paul Chambers

Those We Mourn

Vivian Curry

Christmas is not just a date on the calendar; it is a reminder of divine love manifest in the form of a vulnerable child, born in a manger. The warmth of the stable, the gentle lowing of cattle, and the brilliance of the star above tell a story of hope and boundless grace.

In the midst of the festivities, let us not forget that Christmas is the celebration of God's greatest gift to humanity—the gift of Emmanuel, "God with us." In the face of our struggles, uncertainties, and yearnings, God chose to draw near, to walk alongside us in the person of Jesus Christ. This is the heart of Christmas—the miraculous intersection of the divine and the human.

As we exchange gifts and share in the company of loved ones, let us remember that the ultimate gift is the love that flowed from that Bethlehem stable. It is a love that knows no boundaries, no conditions, and no exclusions. It is a love that invites us to embrace one another with compassion, kindness, and a spirit of generosity.

May this Christmas Eve be a sacred moment of reflection and gratitude. Let us carry the light of Christ into the world, becoming beacons of hope and agents of love.

In our gatherings and in our solitude, may we experience the profound peace that surpasses understanding—the peace that was heralded by angels on that holy night.

May the joy of Christmas fill your hearts and homes, and may the love born in Bethlehem guide us all in the days to come.

Blessings and Merry Christmas,
Pastor Veronika