



*Hope. Peace. Joy. Love.* is a children's Christmas service inspired by a traditional interpretation of the Advent wreath. It illuminates how our Savior's love gives hope, peace, and joy to all believers.

## Welcome

Thank you for joining us for worship this morning. In our service today we gather before our heavenly Father to offer him our worship and praise. We also gather to strengthen ourselves through the study of God's holy and powerful Word. May he bless our worship and study during this special Children's Christmas Service.

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# CHRISTMAS at St. Luke's Lutheran Church

*We invite you to celebrate the birth of our Savior with us.*

Christmas Eve Song Service – 6:30 PM / Christmas Day – 9:00 AM

## The Prelude

### Opening (Processional) Hymn

#### 360 Behold, a Branch Is Growing

Congregation



1 Be - hold, a branch is grow - ing of love - liest form and  
2 I - sa - iah had fore - told it in words of prom - ise  
3 This flow'r, whose fra - grance ten - der with sweet-ness fills the  
4 O Sav - ior, child of Mar - y, who felt our hu - man



grace! As proph-ets sang, fore - know-ing, it springs from Jes - se's  
sure, and Mar - y's arms en - fold it, a vir - gin meek and  
air, dis - pels with glo - rious splen-dor the dark - ness ev - 'ry -  
woes, O Sav - ior, King of glo - ry, who con - quered all our



race and now be - gins to flow'r in midst of  
pure. Through God's e - ter - nal will this child to  
where. True man, and yet true God, from sin and  
foes, bring us at last, we pray, to the bright



cold - est win - ter, at deep - est mid - night hour.  
her is giv - en at mid - night calm and still.  
death he saves us and light - ens ev - 'ry load.  
courts of heav - en and to the end - less day.

Text: German, 16th cent.; (sts. 1-3): tr. Harriet R. K. Spaeth, 1845-1925; (st. 4): John C. Mattes, 1876-1948, alt.

Tune: Alte Katholische Geistliche Kirchengeseng, Köln, 1599

Text and tune: Public domain

### Song “In a Little Stable” – *Sunday School Pre-K*

*Please stand*

## Invocation

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

**Amen.**

### **Opening Dialogue (*excerpts from Psalm 33*):**

Pastor: 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.**

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

**Congregation: Let all the earth fear the LORD; let all the people of the world revere him.**

Pastor: 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.**

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

**Congregation: May your unfailing love be with us, LORD, even as we put our hope in you.**

Pastor: Heavenly Father, our hearts again rejoice this night 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,” stanzas. 1,5-6 [CW 329]*).

**Congregation:** Amen.

*Please be seated*

## 1. HOPE

*Reflecting on the HOPE of Christ’s coming, past and future, and God’s promises of redemption.*

**Narration:** *Chelsea Walker*

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 . . .

**Recitation:** *Students (Boys)*

[The serpent] said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden’?” (Genesis 3:1).

## Recitation: Students (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’” (Genesis 3:2-3).

## Recitation: Students (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” (Genesis 3:4-5).

## Recitation: Students (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 (Genesis 3:6).

## Narration: Chelsea Walker

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: Students

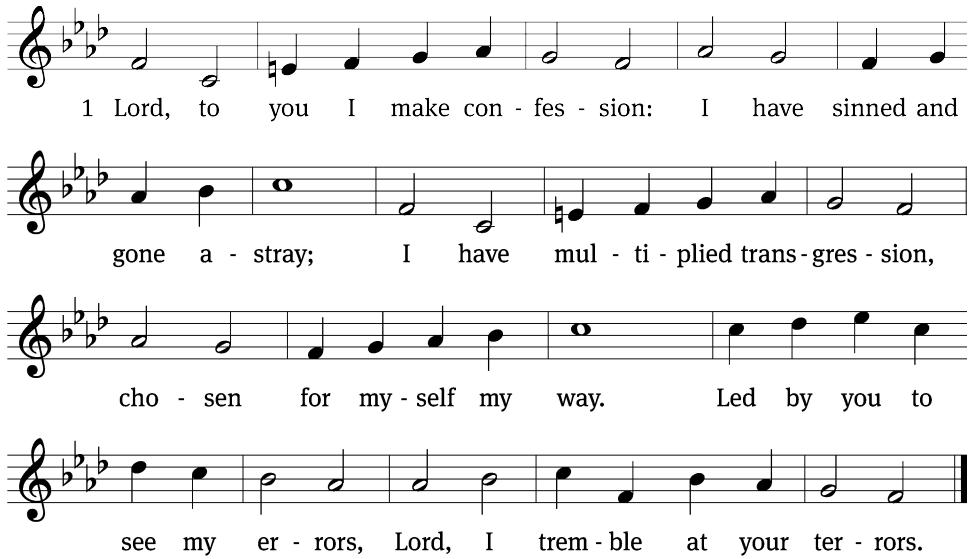
Sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned (Romans 5:12).

## Narration: Chelsea Walker

Everyone has turned away, all have become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one (Psalm 53:3). We all desperately need hope, just as Adam and Eve did. With generations of God’s people, we confess our sins.

## 653 Lord, to You I Make Confession

Congregation



1 Lord, to you I make con - fes - sion: I have sinned and  
gone a - stray; I have mul - ti - plied trans - ges - sion,  
cho - sen for my - self my way. Led by you to  
see my er - rors, Lord, I trem - ble at your ter - rors.

Text: Johann Franck, 1618–1677, abr.; tr. Catherine Winkworth, 1827–1878, alt.

Tune: Johann Crüger, 1598–1662, alt.

Text and tune: Public domain

*Lighting of the Hope candle – Tyler Fair*

## Narration: Kenley Woolworth

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

## Recitation: Tyler Fair/Braxton Rupprecht

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: Kenley Woolworth

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.

## **HYMN: CW 574 “The Tree of Life” - *Choir***

### **2. PEACE**

*Embracing the peace that Christ brings into the world and seeking peace within our hearts and relationships.*

#### Narration: Bentleigh Goss

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: Nate Walker/Tommy Frank

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).

## Narration: Bentleigh Goss

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: Nate Walker/Tommy Frank

“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 – Tommy Frank*

## Narration: Kaylee Hicks

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: K-3 Students

They do not speak peaceably, but devise false accusations against those who live quietly in the land (Psalm 35:20). Too long have I lived among those who hate peace (Psalm 120:6).

## Narration: Kaylee Hicks

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: K-3 Students

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).

## Congregation: Men

**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).**

## Congregation: Women

**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

St 1-2 Students; 3-4 Congregation



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



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.

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## 3. JOY

*Rejoicing in the anticipation of Jesus' arrival.*Narration: *Braylin Zieroff*

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: Eva Gomez/Ava Denniston/Piper Hicks**

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: Braylin Zieroff**

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: Eva Gomez/Ava Denniston/Piper Hicks**

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: Ava Denniston**

“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: Eva Gomez**

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

### **Recitation: Piper Hicks**

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

## **Song: “Glory” -Mary Dorn Lippert *Students***

*Lighting of the Joy candle - Nate Walker*

### **Narration: Phoebe Schultz**

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: K-3 Students**

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “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: Phoebe Schultz**

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: K-3 Students**

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. 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: Phoebe Schultz

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

Congregation

1 Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth re -  
 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

ceive her King; let ev - 'ry heart pre - pare him  
 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 -

room and heav'n and na - ture sing, and heav'n and na - ture  
 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

sing, and heav'n, and heav'n and na - ture sing.  
 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

*Remembering God's love for humanity in sending his Son and reflecting that love to others.*

### Narration: Jared Frank

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: K-3 Students

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

### Narration: Jared Frank

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

### Recitation: Tyler Fair/Braxton Rupprecht

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 – Braxton Rupprecht*

### Narration: Piper Schultz

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: *Nate Walker/Tommy Frank*

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: Piper Schultz

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: Eva Gomez/Ava Denniston/Piper Hicks

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).

## Song: “Light One Candle” – Natalie Sleeth - Students

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*Lighting of the Christ candle – Pastor Arnold*

### **Pastor:**

*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: Congregation

**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:**

## Recitation: Students

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).

## **Offering**

*Please stand*

## **Prayer**

### **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.

## Blessing

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.

The Lord look on you with favor and give you peace.

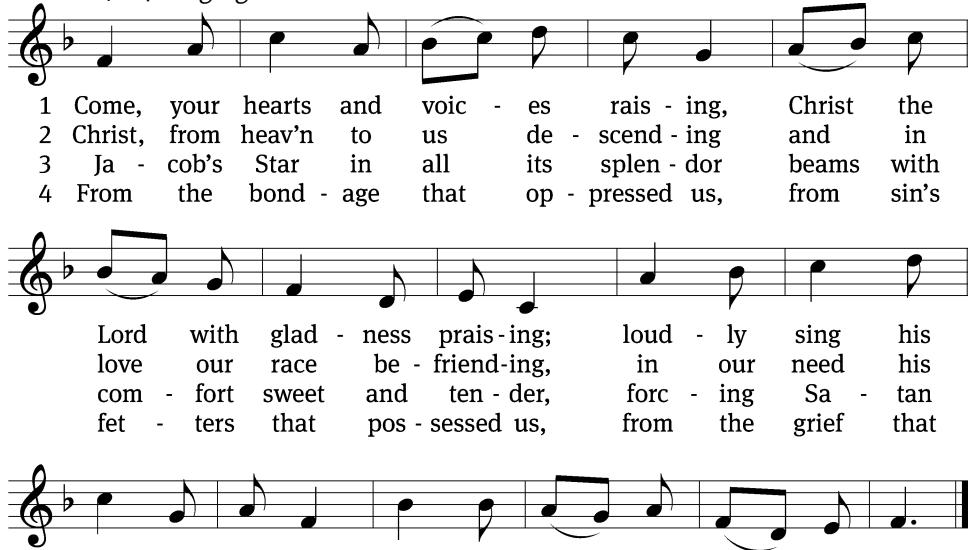
**Amen.**

*Please be seated*

## Closing (Recessional) Hymn:

### 362 Come, Your Hearts and Voices Raising

*Stanza 1 Students / 2-4 Congregation*



1 Come, your hearts and voic - es rais - ing, Christ the  
2 Christ, from heav'n to us de - scend - ing and in  
3 Ja - cob's Star in all its splen - dor beams with  
4 From the bond - age that op - pressed us, from sin's

Lord with glad - ness prais - ing; loud - ly sing his  
love our race be - friend - ing, in our need his  
com - fort sweet and ten - der, forc - ing Sa - tan  
fet - ters that pos - sessed us, from the grief that

love a - maz - ing, wor - thy folk of Christ - en - dom.  
help ex - tend - ing, saved us from the wi - ly foe.  
to sur - ren - der, break - ing all the pow'r's of hell.  
sore dis - tressed us, we, the cap - tives, now are free.

Text: Paul Gerhardt, 1607-1676, abr.; tr. The Lutheran Hymnal, 1941, alt.

Tune: German, 14th cent.

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Tune: Public domain

*Acknowledgments*

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We extend sincere gratitude to all who made our Children's Christmas Service a truly beautiful celebration, including our exceptionally gifted musicians, Olivia Marker, our talented organist, and Beth Solgat, our skilled pianist.

***We invite you to join us in fellowship immediately following the Service at the Cookie Crunch.***



Thank you for worshipping with us. We invite you to join us again.

**9:00 AM Sunday Worship Service - 10:15 AM Sunday School/Bible Class  
7:00 PM Monday Worship Service**

*Visitors are invited to sign our guest book in the entryway. If you have any questions, the ushers are ready to assist you. Please feel free to visit after the service.*

**St. Luke's Lutheran Church and School**

Vassar, Michigan 48768

*Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod*

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Please note: Sunday services are recorded and streamed on YouTube. [www.youtube.com/@stlukesvassar](http://www.youtube.com/@stlukesvassar)