

The Nativity of Our Lord



In winter's deepest night, we welcome the light of the Christ child. Isaiah declares that the light of the long-promised king will illumine the world and bring endless peace and justice. Paul reminds us that the grace of God through Jesus Christ brings salvation to all people. The angels declare that Jesus' birth is good and joyful news for everyone, including lowly shepherds. Filled with the light that shines in our lives, we go forth to share the light of Christ with the whole world.

GATHERING

PRELUDES

***Rise up, Shepherd, and Follow*..... Ruth McEnery Stuart**
Bob Schweppenheiser

***In the Black Midwinter*..... Ruth Elaine Schram**
Duet – Kirstin Gist and Jordan Russell

***Une Vierge Pucelle*..... Edward Good**
Jared Gist – organ Carol Waltz - piano

The congregation stands and faces the rear of the church

INVITATORY

[P]: Unto us a child is born. Unto us a Son is given; and the government shall be on his shoulder; and his name shall be called wonderful, mighty counselor, the Prince of peace. O sing unto the Lord a new song; for he has done marvelous things. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end.

[C]: Amen

GATHERING HYMN *Oh, Come All Ye Faithful*

1 Oh, come, all ye faithful,
 joyful and triumphant!
 Oh, come ye, oh, come ye to Bethlehem;
 come and behold him born the king of angels:

Refrain

Oh, come, let us adore him,
oh, come, let us adore him,
oh, come, let us adore him,
Christ the Lord!

- 2 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*
- 3 Sing, choirs of angels,
sing in exultation,
sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!
Glory to God
in the highest: *Refrain*
- 4 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*

P: Blessed are you, O Christ, Son of God, you were before time began and came into the world to save us.

C: **Blessed are you, Sun of Righteousness, you shine with the Father's love and illumine the whole universe.**

P: Blessed are you, Son of Mary; born a child, you shared our humanity.

C: **Let heaven and earth ring out their praise.**

P: O Mystery of the Word made flesh, with all the voices of heaven, we celebrate your coming as our Savior.

C: **Let men and women and angels sing of your glory.**

P: O Splendor of the Father's Light, with all the creatures on earth we sing and dance at your birth.

C: **Praise and honor and glory to you, O Incarnate Word.**

HYMN OF PRAISE *Angels We Have Heard on High*

1 Angels we have heard on high,
sweetly singing o'er the plains,
and the mountains in reply,
echoing their joyous strains.

Refrain

Gloria in excelsis Deo;
Gloria in excelsis Deo.

2 Shepherds, why this jubilee?
Why your joyous strains prolong?
What the gladsome tidings be
which inspire your heav'nly song? *Refrain*

3 Come to Bethlehem and see
him whose birth the angels sing;
come, adore on bended knee
Christ the Lord, the newborn king. *Refrain*

PRAYER OF THE DAY

P: Let us pray.

P: 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.

C: Amen

Sit

WORD**FIRST READING: Isaiah 9:2-7**

This poem promises deliverance from Assyrian oppression, a hope based on the birth of a royal child with a name full of promise. While Judah's king will practice justice and righteousness, the real basis for faith lies in God's passion for the people: The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this!

A: A reading from Isaiah:

² The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
those who lived in a land of deep darkness—
on them light has shined.

³ You 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.

⁴ For 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.

⁵ For all the boots of the tramping warriors
and all the garments rolled in blood
shall be burned as fuel for the fire.

⁶ For 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.

⁷ His 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.

A: The word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

*Stand***GOSPEL HYMN Hark! The Herald Angels Sing**

1 Hark! The herald angels sing,
 “Glory to the newborn king;
 peace on earth, and mercy mild,
 God and sinners reconciled.”
 Joyful, all you nations, rise;
 join the triumph of the skies;
 with angelic hosts proclaim,
 “Christ is born in Bethlehem!” *Refrain*

Refrain

Hark! The herald angels sing,
 “Glory to the newborn king!”

2 Christ, by highest heav'n adored,
 Christ, the everlasting Lord,
 late in time behold him come,
 offspring of a virgin's womb.
 Veiled in flesh the Godhead see!
 Hail, incarnate deity!
 Pleased as man with us to dwell,
 Jesus, our Emmanuel! *Refrain*

GOSPEL: Luke 2:1-14

God's greatest gift comes as a baby in a manger. Angels announce the “good news of great joy” and proclaim God's blessing of peace.

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

C: Glory to you, O Lord.

¹ In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. ² This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³ All went to their own towns to be registered. ⁴ 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. ⁵ He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. ⁶ While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. ⁷ 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.

⁸ In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹ Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰ 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: ¹¹ to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹² This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.” ¹³ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,

¹⁴ “Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace among those whom he favors!”

P: The Gospel of the Lord.

C: Praise to you, O Christ.

GOSPEL RESPONSE Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

3 Hail the heav’n-born Prince of Peace!
Hail the Sun of righteousness!
Light and life to all he brings,
ris’n with healing in his wings.
Mild he lays his glory by,
born that we no more may die,
born to raise each child of earth
born to give us second birth.

Refrain

Hark! The herald angels sing,
“Glory to the newborn king!”

Sit

SERMON**Pastor Amme**

Stand

HYMN OF THE DAY *Good Christian Friends, Rejoice*

1 Good Christian friends, rejoice
with heart and soul and voice;
give ye heed to what we say:
Jesus Christ is born today;
ox and ass before him bow,
and he is in the manger now.
Christ is born today!
Christ is born today!

2 Good Christian friends, rejoice
with heart and soul and voice;
now ye hear of endless bliss:
Jesus Christ was born for this!
He has opened heaven's door,
and we are blest forevermore.
Christ was born for this!
Christ was born for this!

3 Good Christian friends, rejoice
with heart and soul and voice;
now ye need not fear the grave;
Jesus Christ was born to save!
Calls you one and calls you all
to gain the everlasting hall.
Christ was born to save!
Christ was born to save!

Text: Medieval Latin carol; tr. John Mason Neale, 1818-1866

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;
by the power of the Holy Spirit
he became incarnate from the virgin Mary, and was made man.
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.
With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified.
He 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,**

THE PRAYERS FOR CHRISTMAS

P: Let us pray. O God, to whom glory is sung in the highest while on earth peace is proclaimed to all people of goodwill, grant that goodwill to us, your servants. Cleanse us from all our sins, and give perpetual peace to us and to all people; through your mercy, O God, who blesses and governs all things, now and forever.

C: Amen

P: God of love, Father of all, the darkness that covered the earth has given way to the bright dawn of your Word made flesh. Make us a people of this light. Make us faithful to your Word, that we may bring your life to the waiting world; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

C: Amen

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

C: Amen

PEACE

P: The peace of Christ be with you always.

C: And also with you.

The pastor and congregation greet one another in the name of the Lord.

Peace be with you. **R:** Peace be with you.

Sit

MEAL

OFFERING

Stand

OFFERTORY HYMN *The First Noel*

1 The first Noel the angel did say
was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay;
in fields where they lay, keeping their sheep,
on a cold winter's night that was so deep.

Refrain

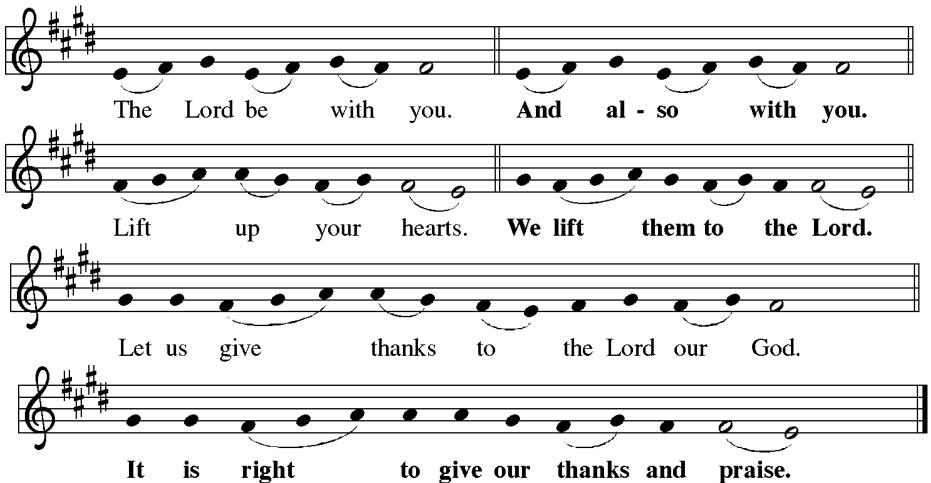
Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel!
Born is the King of Israel.

- 2 They looked up and saw a star
shining in the east beyond them far;
and to the earth it gave great light,
and so it continued both day and night. *Refrain*

OFFERING PRAYER

A: Let us pray.

C: God of heaven and earth,
from the beginning, you have called forth life,
in which you take delight.
The trees, the fields, and the seas sing for joy.
Bless now these gifts, received from your bounty,
that we may join the chorus of creation
to tell of your salvation from day to day.
Amen.

GREAT THANKSGIVING


The Lord be with you. And al - so with you.

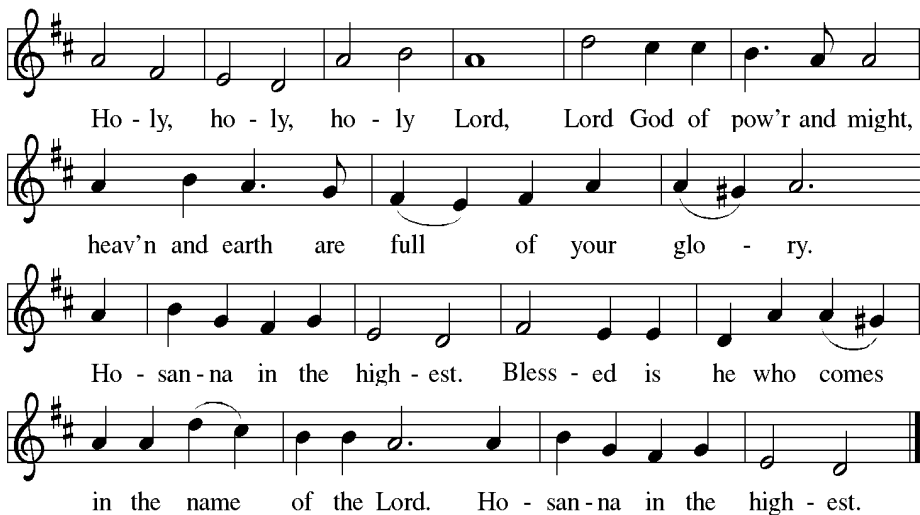
Lift up your hearts. We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

PREFACE

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God, through our Savior Jesus Christ. In the wonder and mystery of the Word made flesh you have opened the eyes of faith to a new and radiant vision of your glory, that beholding the God made visible, we may be drawn to love the God whom we cannot see. And so, with all the choirs of angels, with the Church on earth, and the hosts of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:



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

[P]: Holy God, Creator of all and Source of life,
 at the birth of time your Word brought light into the world.
 In the fullness of time, you sent your Word, born of Mary,
 to shine in our darkness and to make us your sons and daughters.
 In the night in which he was betrayed,
 our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks;
 broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:
 Take and eat; this is my body, given for you.
 Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks,
and gave it for all to drink, saying:

This cup is the new covenant in my blood,
shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin.
Do this for the remembrance of me.

Remembering, therefore, his birth and life among us,
his death and resurrection, we await his coming again
when all things will be restored in him.

By your Spirit bless us and this bread and cup, that,
held and nourished by you, we may live as your children,
shining with the light of your Son.

Through him all glory and honor is yours, Almighty Father,
with the Holy Spirit, in your holy Church, both now and forever.

C: Amen

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: A child has been born for us, a Son given to us.
Come, receive the gift of Jesus.

C: Thanks be to 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.

Sit

COMMUNION

All baptized believers are invited to this holy meal. Those not communing are invited for a blessing. Please follow the instructions of the ushers to gather at the altar table.

As the ministers give the bread and wine, they say these words to each communicant:

The body of Christ, given for you. The blood of Christ, shed for you.

The communicant may say: Amen

HYMN *It Came upon the Midnight Clear*

- 1 It came upon the midnight clear,
 that glorious song of old,
 from angels bending near the earth
 to touch their harps of gold:
 "Peace on the earth, good will to all,
 from heav'n's all-gracious king."
 The world in solemn stillness lay
 to hear the angels sing.

- 2 Still through the cloven skies they come
 with peaceful wings unfurled,
 and still their heav'nly music floats
 o'er all the weary world.
 Above its sad and lowly plains
 they bend on hov'ring wing,
 and ever o'er its babel sounds
 the blessed angels sing.

- 3 And you, beneath life's crushing load,
 whose forms are bending low,
 who toil along the climbing way
 with painful steps and slow:
 look now, for glad and golden hours
 come swiftly on the wing;
 oh, rest beside the weary road
 and hear the angels sing!

- 4 For lo! The days are hast'ning on,
 by prophets seen of old,
 when with the ever-circling years
 shall come the time foretold,
 when peace shall over all the earth
 its ancient splendors fling,
 and all the world give back the song
 which now the angels sing.

HYMN *O Little Town of Bethlehem*

- 1 O little town of Bethlehem,
 how still we see thee lie!
 Above thy deep and dreamless sleep
 the silent stars go by;
 yet in thy dark streets shineth
 the everlasting light.
 The hopes and fears of all the years
 are met in thee tonight.
- 2 For Christ is born of Mary,
 and, gathered all above
 while mortals sleep, the angels keep
 their watch of wond'ring love.
 O morning stars, together
 proclaim the holy birth,
 and praises sing to God the king,
 and peace to all the earth!
- 3 How silently, how silently
 the wondrous gift is giv'n!
 So God imparts to human hearts
 the blessings of his heav'n.
 No ear may hear his coming;
 but, in this world of sin,
 where meek souls will receive him, still
 the dear Christ enters in.
- 4 O holy child of Bethlehem,
 descend to us, we pray;
 cast out our sin, and enter in,
 be born in us today.
 We hear the Christmas angels
 the great glad tidings tell;
 oh, come to us, abide with us,
 our Lord Immanuel!

Stand

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

C: Amen

POST-COMMUNION PRAYER

A: Merciful God,
we thank you for Jesus, who is our heavenly food.
Strengthened by this goodness,
send us forth to announce your peace,
comfort the afflicted,
and share the good news of great joy.

C: Amen

CANDLELIGHT ADORATION

The pastor lights his candle from the altar candle. He then lights the candles of the acolytes. They in turn give the light to the first worshipper in each pew. The lighted candle is never tilted but is always held upright when giving light to another.

P: Jesus, the bright Morning Star, shines light in the world.

C: By day and night he shines for all to see.

P: Jesus was born in the midst of injustice and poverty

C: that the world may see the justice and richness of God.

P: God so loved the world that he gave his only Son,

C: so that all who believe in him may not perish but have eternal life.

P: Jesus is the light of the world.

C: Jesus is the light of our lives.

P: God shines His Holy Light,

C: in the quiet of this holy night.

As the Acolytes pass the light to members of the congregation, pass it to the person next to you. DO NOT TIP a lighted candle.

HYMN ***Silent Night, Holy Night***

- 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!
- 3 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.

SENDING

BLESSING

[P]: Almighty God and Father of light, a child is born for us and a Son is given to us. Your eternal Word leaped down from heaven in the silent watches of the night, and now your Church is filled with wonder and light of your Son. Open our hearts to receive his life and increase our vision with the rising of the dawn, that our lives may be filled with his glory and his peace; who lives and reigns forever and ever.

[C]: Amen

P: The Almighty and Incarnate God,
the Father, the + Son, and the Holy Spirit,
bless you now and forever.

C: **Amen**

The worshippers' hand candles are extinguished.

The congregation turns to follow the processional cross.

SENDING HYMN Joy to the World

- 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.
- 2 Joy to the earth, the Savior reigns!
Let all their songs employ,
while fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains
repeat the sounding joy,
repeat the sounding joy,
repeat, repeat the sounding joy.
- 3 No more let sin and sorrow grow
nor thorns infest the ground;
he comes to make his blessings flow
far as the curse is found,
far as the curse is found,
far as, far as the curse is found.
- 4 He rules the world with truth and grace
and makes the nations prove
the glories of his righteousness
and wonders of his love,
and wonders of his love,
and wonders, wonders of his love.

DISMISSAL

A: Glory to God in the Highest!

C: **Peace to God's people on earth!**

A: Go in peace. The Word of God dwells in you richly.

C: **Thanks be to God.**

POSTLUDE

SERVICE ASSISTANTS

Ushers: Jody Fullmer, Carl Gee, Larry & Donna Britton, Diana Rooker

Lay Assistant: Dave Bausinger; **Comm. Asst.:** Fred Harbaugh

Acolyte/Crucifer: Doriann Morris; **Altar Guild:** Alice Morrison

Greeters/Communion Presenters: Carl Gee and Jody Fullmer

Flower Delivery: Cindy Bennett

IN BLESSED MEMORY

The Altar Flowers are given to the Glory of God and in honor of Baby Jesus.

The Basket of flowers is given to the Glory of God and in loving memory of Peter L. Sinibaldi Sr., and Lillian Sinibaldi, by their children and their families.

The Bud Vase is given to the Glory of God and in loving memory of Karen Hockman Thomas by Linda Smith and Laurie, Matthew and Michael.

The Outdoor Wreaths are given to the Glory of God and in loving memory of Susie and David Hutchinson by Gary Hutchinson.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Welcome to Messiah Church! It is our joy to have you worship with us. If you are visiting, please make yourself known and leave your name & information to a congregation member. *We hope to see you again.*

Pledge cards and Time & Talent forms will be accepted through December 29.

Poinsettias are to be picked up after the 11:00 pm worship service on Christmas Eve or on Sunday, December 29 at the church.

OFFICE HOLIDAY HOURS

CLOSED – Christmas Day, December 25 – Wednesday, January 1
Normal office hours will resume on Thursday, January 2 at 9:00 am
Have a Blessed Holiday! From the staff at Messiah



MESSIAH LUTHERAN CHURCH
REV. A. BRUCE AMME, PRESIDING AND PREACHING
JARED GIST, ORGANIST

324 South Howard Street | South Williamsport, PA 17702
(570) 326-9171 | www.messiahsouth.org

Detail Disoriented

Read Luke 2 closely, and you will notice that many of the details we assume about the Christmas story are noticeably absent. Luke does not tell us about a journey on a donkey, an innkeeper, a stable, or any animals, hay, or straw. The text even leaves unclear the reason the infant Jesus is laid in a manger, which is an unusual second option after finding no room at the inn.

It is very easy to get lost in the details (real or imagined), or at least to get distracted by them. They often become the center of our Christmas pageant preparations and the focus of our nativity scenes. But when we worry too much about sheep, hay, and stables, we can lose sight of the heart of the story: Jesus, the promised one, is born. Jesus is born, and through him, God will scatter the proud, lift up the lowly, fill the hungry with good things, and show mercy from generation to generation (Luke 2:51-55).

For many of us, preparations for Advent and Christmas include many details: Advent calendars, decorations, special foods, gatherings, concerts, additional worship services, gifts, guests. These details of the season can bring us delight and fulfillment. They can also feel like disorienting burdens.

When the details feel like they are too much, let us return to the heart of the story: Jesus is born, not at an ideal time, but at precisely the right time. Jesus is born, even in the middle of our own messy lives and preparations. Jesus is born, even into our imperfect world. When all else is cleared away, all the details swept aside, this is still our good news: Jesus, our wonderful counselor and bringer of peace (Isaiah 9:6), is born.

From sundaysandseasons.com.

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