



Celebrate

Nativity of Our Lord / Christmas Eve
December 24, 2025

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.

Prayer of the Day

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.

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!

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.
³You have multiplied exultation;
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.
⁷Great will be his authority,
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.

Psalm

Psalm 96; refrain, Ps. 96:11



Sing to the LORD¹ a new song;
sing to the LORD,¹ all the earth.

²Sing to the LORD, bless the name¹ of the LORD;
proclaim God's salvation from¹ day to day.

³Declare God's glory a-¹ mong the nations
and God's wonders a-¹ mong all peoples.

⁴For great is the LORD and greatly¹ to be praised,
more to be feared¹ than all gods. R

⁵As for all the gods of the nations, they¹ are but idols;
but you, O LORD, have¹ made the heavens.

⁶Majesty and magnificence are¹ in your presence;
power and splendor are in your¹ sanctuary.

⁷Ascribe to the LORD, you families¹ of the peoples,
ascribe to the LORD hon-¹ or and power.

⁸Ascribe to the LORD the honor due the¹ holy name;
bring offerings and enter the courts¹ of the LORD. R

⁹Worship the LORD in the beau-¹ ty of holiness;
tremble before the LORD, ¹ all the earth.

¹⁰Tell it out among the nations: "The¹ LORD is king!
The one who made the world so firm that it cannot be moved
will judge the peo-¹ ples with equity."

¹¹Let the heavens rejoice, and let the¹ earth be glad;
let the sea thunder and all that is in it;
let the field be joyful and all that¹ is therein.

¹²Then shall all the trees of the wood shout for joy
at your com-¹ ing, O LORD,
for you come to¹ judge the earth.

¹³You will judge the¹ world with righteousness
and the peoples¹ with your truth. R

The appearance of God's grace in Jesus Christ brings salvation for all humanity. Consequently, in the present we live wisely and justly while also anticipating the hope of our Savior's final appearance.

The 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.

Gospel

Luke 2:1-14 [15-20]

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.

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

⁸Now in that same region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night.⁹Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.¹⁰But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for see, I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people:¹¹to you is born this day in the city

of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord.¹²This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger."¹³And 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!"

¹⁵When 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."¹⁶So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph and the child lying in the manger.¹⁷When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child,¹⁸and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them,¹⁹and Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart.²⁰The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, just as it had been told them.]

Prayers of Intercession

The prayers are prepared locally for each occasion. The following examples may be adapted or used as appropriate.

Empowered by the news of Christ's birth, let us pray boldly for the church, creation, and all who are in need.

A brief silence.

Gathering God, you bring your people from every corner of the earth together before the manger that you have made a throne. Unite the church in love as we rejoice in the news of your coming. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Creating God, you brought forth the earth and all that is in it. Join our voices with the roaring seas, the exulting fields, and the trees of the forest singing for joy on this holy night. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Transforming God, the world trembles amid violence and war. Empower our hands, feet, and hearts with your Spirit to shatter the rod of the oppressor and turn swords into plowshares (*especially in . . . specific instances of conflict may be named*). Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Shepherding God, you lead us to your love in the face of our neighbor. Send us into the world to find your Word made flesh in one another, especially those who are sick or struggling (*especially*). Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Nurturing God, you dwell with us in humble places. Sustain housing and clothing ministries in this community, that all find shelter and warmth. We pray especially for youth seeking safety and care. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

Abiding God, you remain at the side of all the departed. Grant all who mourn hope in the resurrection and peace in Christ Jesus. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

With the joy of Christ's birth in our hearts, we commend our prayers to you, O God, trusting in your boundless mercy and eternal love; through Jesus Christ our Savior.

Amen.

Preparing for Next Week

Thursday (Nativity of Our Lord, Christmas Day) Isaiah 52:7-10; Psalm 98; Hebrews 1:1-4 [5-12]; John 1:1-14.
Friday (Stephen, Deacon and Martyr) Matthew 23:34-39. **Saturday (John, Apostle and Evangelist)** John 21:20-25. **First Sunday of Christmas** Isaiah 63:7-9; Psalm 148; Hebrews 2:10-18; Matthew 2:13-23.

CELEBRATE December 24, 2025

Volume 57, Number 1

CELEBRATE (ISSN 1083-3242, USPS 763-460) is published quarterly by Augsburg Fortress, 411 Washington Avenue North, Third Floor, Minneapolis, MN, 55401. Periodicals postage paid in St. Paul, MN and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to Celebrate, Augsburg Fortress Publishers, P.O. Box 1553, Minneapolis, MN 55440-1553. Printed in U.S.A. Price per weekly part \$5.79 per 100 copies; price in Canada subject to exchange rates. Minimum order 50 copies of each issue; all orders must be in multiples of 50. Copyright © 2025 Augsburg Fortress. All rights reserved. May not be reproduced. Revised Common Lectionary © 1992 Consultation on Common Texts. Readings from the New Revised Standard Version-Updated Edition. Copyright © 2021 National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide. Prayer of the day, psalm, and readings during the week from *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* © 2006, admin. Augsburg Fortress. Refrain music by Robert Webber. Refrain accompaniment is in *Psalter for Worship*, Year A (Augsburg Fortress, 2007). Please visit our website at augsburgfortress.org. Lectionary year A.