



**The Holy Communion**

**The Nativity of Our Lord**

**Christmas Day**

**December 25, 2023**

**10:00 a.m.**

# WELCOME TO GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH



**Children's Resources** Children's resources, including activity bags, worship bulletins and booster seats, are available in the narthex and from the ushers.

**Assistance in Worship** For those who find it difficult to stand during any part of the service, please remain seated and contact an usher if you would like Holy Communion to be brought to you.

Sound enhancement units and large print bulletins are available in the back of the church and from the ushers.

**Cell Phones and Pagers** Please silence all cell phones and pagers. Thank you.

**Holy Communion** In Holy Communion the crucified and risen Christ is present, giving his true body and blood as food and drink. All baptized Christians are invited to the table where Christ is host.

**Bulletin Cover** The bulletin cover art is by Aryelis Cabral, a student at Grace Lutheran School.

# ✠ GATHERING ✠

PRELUDE: Greensleeves

arr. Matthew Naughtin

*We stand and face the cross in procession.*

ENTRANCE HYMN: What Feast of Love

(blue) WOV #701



1 What feast of love is of - fered here, what ban - quet come from heav - en?  
2 What light of truth is of - fered here, what cov - e - nant from heav - en?  
3 What wine of love is of - fered here, what crim - son drink from heav - en?



What food of ev - er - last - ing life, what gra - cious gift is giv - en?  
What hope of ev - er - last - ing life, what won - drous word is giv - en?  
What stream of ev - er - last - ing life, what pre - cious blood is giv - en?



This, this is Christ the king, the bread come down from heav - en.  
This, this is Christ the king, the sun come down from heav - en.  
This, this is Christ the king, the sweet - est wine of heav - en.



Oh, taste and see and sing! How sweet the man - na giv - en!  
Oh, see and hear and sing! The Word of God is giv - en!  
Oh, taste and see and sing! The Son of God is giv - en!

Text: Delores Dufner, OSB, b. 1939

Music: GREENSLEEVES, English ballad, 16th cent.

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## APOSTOLIC GREETING

☐ The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,  
and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

☑ And also with you.

# KYRIE

**A** In peace, let us pray to the Lord. **C** Lord, have mer - cy.

**A** For the peace from above, and for our salvation, let us pray to the Lord.

**C** Lord, have mer - cy.

**A** For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the Church of God,

and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord.

**C** Lord, have mer - cy.

**A** For this holy house, and for all who offer here their worship and praise,

let us pray to the Lord. **C** Lord, have mer - cy.

**A** Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gra-cious Lord. **C** A - men



## PRAYER OF THE DAY

**P** The Lord be with you.

**C** And also with you.

**P** Let us pray.

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 lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**C** Amen.

*We sit.*

**ANTHEM:** *Das Wort ward Fleisch*

Constantin Christian Dedekind

Das Wort ward Fleisch und wohnte unter us,  
**The Word became flesh and dwelt among us,**  
und wird sagen seine Herrlichkeit,  
**and we proclaim his glory,**  
als des eingebornen Sohns vom Vater,  
**as the only begotten Son of the Father,**  
voller Gnade und Wahrheit.  
**full of grace and truth.**

John 1

## ✠ WORD ✠

**FIRST READING:** Isaiah 52:7–10

<sup>7</sup>How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news, who announces salvation, who says to Zion, “Your God reigns.”  
<sup>8</sup>Listen! Your sentinels lift up their voices, together they sing for joy; for in plain sight they see the return of the LORD to Zion. <sup>9</sup>Break forth together into singing, you ruins of Jerusalem; for the LORD has comforted his people, he has redeemed Jerusalem. <sup>10</sup>The LORD has bared his holy arm before the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.

**L** The Word of the Lord.

**C** Thanks be to God.

*The choir introduces the Antiphon; we repeat it and join in singing each time thereafter.*



Sing to the Lord a new song, — for he has done mar-vel-ous things.

**Choir** Sing to the Lord a new song,  
 for he has done marvelous things.  
 With his right hand and his holy arm  
 has he won for himself the victory.  
 The Lord has made known his victory;  
 his righteousness has he openly shown in the sight of the nations.  
 He remembers his mercy and faithfulness to the house of Israel,  
 and all the ends of the earth have seen the victory of our God.

**☛ ANTIPHON**

**Choir** Shout with joy to the LORD, all you lands;  
 lift up your voice, rejoice, and sing.  
 Sing to the LORD with the harp,  
 with the harp and the voice of song.  
 With trumpets and the sound of the horn  
 shout with joy before the king, the LORD.  
 Let the sea make a noise and all that is in it,  
 the lands and those who dwell therein.

**☛ ANTIPHON**

**Choir** Let the rivers clap their hands,  
 and let the hills ring out with joy before the LORD, when he comes to  
 judge the earth.  
 In righteousness shall he judge the world  
 and the peoples with equity.

**☛ ANTIPHON**



**SECOND READING: Hebrews 1:1–12**

<sup>1</sup>Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, <sup>2</sup>but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds. <sup>3</sup>He is the reflection of God’s glory and the exact imprint of God’s very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word.

When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, <sup>4</sup>having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs. <sup>5</sup>For to which of the angels did God ever say, “You are my Son; today I have begotten you”? Or again, “I will be his Father, and he will be my Son”? <sup>6</sup>And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world, he says, “Let all God’s angels worship him.” <sup>7</sup>Of the angels he says, “He makes his angels winds, and his servants flames of fire.” <sup>8</sup>But of the Son he says, “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, and the righteous scepter is the scepter of your kingdom. <sup>9</sup>You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions.” <sup>10</sup>And, “In the beginning, Lord, you founded the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands; <sup>11</sup>they will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like clothing; <sup>12</sup>like a cloak you will roll them up, and like clothing they will be changed. But you are the same, and your years will never end.”

**L** The Word of the Lord.

**G** Thanks be to God.

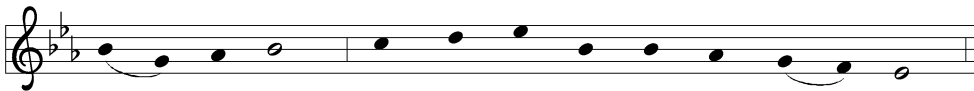
*We stand and face the cross in procession.*

**SEQUENCE HYMN: Of the Father’s Love Begotten**

*(green)* **LBW #42**



1 Of the Fa - ther’s love be - got - ten ere the worlds be -  
 2 Oh, that birth for - ev - er bless - ed, when the vir - gin,  
 3 This is he whom seers in old time chant - ed of with  
 4 Let the heights of heav’n a - dore him; an - gel hosts, his  
 5 Christ, to thee, with God the Fa - ther, and, O Ho - ly



gan to be, he is Al - pha and O - me - ga,  
 full of grace, by the Ho - ly Ghost con - ceiv - ing,  
 one ac - cord, whom the voic - es of the proph - ets  
 prais - es sing; pow’rs, do - min - ions, bow be - fore him  
 Ghost, to thee, hymn and chant and high thanks - giv - ing



he the source, the end - ing he, of the things that are, that  
 bore the Sav - ior of our race, and the babe, the world’s re -  
 prom - ised in their faith - ful word; now he shines, the long - ex -  
 and ex - tol our God and King; let no tongue on earth be  
 and un - wea - ried prais - es be: hon - or, glo - ry, and do -





have been, and that fu - ture years shall see,  
 deem - er, first re - vealed his sa - cred face,  
 pect - ed; let cre - a - tion praise its Lord  
 si - lent, ev - 'ry voice in con - cert ring  
 min - ion, and e - ter - nal vic - to - ry



ev - er - more and ev - er - more.  
 ev - er - more and ev - er - more.  
 ev - er - more and ev - er - more.  
 ev - er - more and ev - er - more.  
 ev - er - more and ev - er - more! A - men.

Text: Marcus Aurelius Clemens Prudentius, 348–413; tr. composite  
 Music: DIVINUM MYSTERIUM, plainsong mode V, 13th cent.

## HOLY GOSPEL: John 1:1–14

**P** The Holy Gospel according to St. John, the first chapter.

**C** **Glory to you, O Lord.**

<sup>1</sup>In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup>He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup>All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being <sup>4</sup>in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. <sup>5</sup>The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. <sup>6</sup>There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. <sup>7</sup>He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. <sup>8</sup>He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. <sup>9</sup>The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

<sup>10</sup>He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. <sup>11</sup>He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. <sup>12</sup>But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, <sup>13</sup>who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God. <sup>14</sup>And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

**P** The Gospel of the Lord.

**C** **Praise to you, O Christ.**

*We face the procession as it returns to the chancel, then sit for the cantata.*

**CANTATA: *Christen, ätzet diesen Tag*, BWV 63**  
(Christians, engrave this day)

Johann Sebastian Bach

*Translation of the German text and notes corresponding to each movement are below.  
Background notes for the cantata are found on pages 25 and 26 in this worship folder.*

## 1. CHORUS

Christen, ätzet diesen Tag  
**Christians, engrave this day**  
In Metall und Marmorsteine!  
**On metal and marble stones!**  
Kommt und eilt mit mir zur Krippen  
**Come and hurry with me to the manger**  
Und erweist mit frohen Lippen  
**And prove with happy lips**  
Euren Dank und eure Pflicht;  
**Your thanks and your duty;**  
Denn der Strahl, so da einbricht,  
**For the beam that there breaks in,**  
Zeigt sich euch zum Gnadenscheine.  
**Appears to you as the light of grace.**

The cantata opens with a great movement of general praise and thanksgiving to God. The joyful chorus in the triple meter of a *gigue* dance opens in a more chordal and vertical style than Bach's usually more linear, imitative writing. The orchestra begins impressively, the chorus enters with new material and the orchestra follows by repeating the beginning music. A more flowing middle section for chorus and instruments follows. The final *da capo* direction indicates a return to the beginning for a repetition of the first instrumental-vocal-instrumental section.

## 2. RECITATIVE (Alto)

O selger Tag! o ungemeines Heute,

**O blessed day! O extraordinary day,**

An dem das Heil der Welt,

**On which the Savior of the world,**

Der Schilo, den Gott schon im Paradies

**The Messiah, whom God already in paradise**

Dem menschlichen Geschlecht verhiess,

**Promised to the human race,**

Nunmehr sich vollkommen dargestellt

**Now reveals himself completely**

Und suchet Israel von der Gefangenschaft und Sklavenketten

**And seeks from the imprisonment and slave chains**

Des Satans zu erretten.

**Of Satan to rescue Israel.**

Du liebster Gott, was sind wir arme doch?

**Dearest God, what then are we poor ones?**

Ein abgefallnes Volk, so dich verlassen;

**A fallen people, who forsake you;**

Und dennoch willst du uns nicht hassen;

**And nevertheless you choose not to hate us;**

Denn eh wir sollen noch nach dem Verdienst zu Boden liegen,

**For before we should by our merit lie on the earth,**

Eh muß die Gottheit sich bequemen,

**Before that the deity must bring himself,**

Die menschliche Natur an sich zu nehmen

**To take human nature upon himself**

Und auf der Erden

**And on the earth**

Im Hirtenstall zu einem Kinde werden.

**In the shepherds' stall to become a child.**

O unbegreifliches, doch seliges Verfügen!

**Oh incomprehensible but blessed decree!**

The text deplores the bonds of sin that bind us but gives thanks to Shiloh (Hebrew for Messiah or Hero) in the coming of the Child Incarnate of God. Strings accompany the florid vocal line in sustained chords. A long, sinuous phrase provides a descriptive setting for *erretten* (to rescue) referring to the deliverance from the chains of sin that enslave us.

3. **ARIA** (Soprano & Bass)

Gott, du hast es wohl gefüget,

**God, you have well ordained,**

Was uns itzo widerfährt.

**What now to us shall happen.**

Drum laßt uns auf ihn stets trauen

**Therefore let us always trust in him**

Und auf seine Gnade bauen,

**And build on his grace,**

Denn er hat uns dies beschert,

**For on us he has bestowed,**

Was uns ewig nun vergnüget.

**What eternally delights us.**

Bach must have had an outstanding oboist who could negotiate the twists and turns of the descanting solo that soars beautifully above the imitative duet of the singers in this abbreviated *da capo* aria. The text refers to the gift of God that has “come to pass,” without specifically naming the Christ Child.

**HOMILY**

Pastor David R. Lyle  
John 1:1–14



*We stand.*

**HYMN OF THE DAY: We Praise You, Jesus, at Your Birth**      Concertato by Michael D. Costello  
Stanza 4 Setting by Johannes Eccard



- ☐ 1. We praise you, Je-sus, at your birth; Clothed in flesh you came to earth.
- ☐ 2. Now in the man-ger we may see God's Son from e - ter - ni - ty,
- ☐ 3. The vir - gin Ma-ry's lul - la - by Calms the in - fant Lord Most High.
- ☐ 4. The Light E - ter - nal, break - ing through, Made the world to gleam a - new;
- ☐ 5. The ver - y Son of God sub - lime En - tered in - to earth - ly time
- ☐ 6. In pov - er - ty he came to earth Show - ing mer - cy by his birth;
- ☐ 7. All this for us our God has done Grant - ing love through his own Son.



The vir - gin bears a sin - less boy And all the an - gels sing for joy.  
The gift from God's e - ter - nal throne Here clothed in our poor flesh and bone.  
Up - on her lap con - tent is he Who keeps the earth and sky and sea.  
His beams have pierced the core of night, He makes us child - ren of the light.  
To lead us from this world of cares To heav - en's courts as bles - sed heirs.  
He makes us rich in heav'n - ly ways As we, like an - gels, sing his praise.  
There - fore, all Christ - en - dom, re - joice And sing his praise with end - less voice.



Al - le - lu - ia!

Text: German, c. 1380, st. 1; Martin Luther, 1483–1546, sts. 2–7; tr. Gregory J. Wismar, b. 1946, sts. 1, 6;  
tr. F. Samuel Janzow, 1913–2001, sts. 2, 4; tr. *Lutheran Service Book*, 2006, sts. 3, 5, 7  
Tune: *Eyn Enchiridion oder Handbüchlein*, Erfurt, 1524

Text for sts. 1, 3, 5–7: © 2006 Concordia Publishing House. Reprinted by permission of OneLicense.net A-704569.  
Text for sts. 2, 4: © 1978 Concordia Publishing House. Reprinted by permission of OneLicense.net A-704569.

## NICENE CREED

**P** Living together in trust and hope, we confess our faith:

**C** 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.

## PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH

*Each petition concludes:*

**A** Lord, in your mercy,

**C** hear our prayer.

*The prayers conclude:*

**P** Into your hands, O Lord, we commend all for whom we pray,  
Trusting in your mercy; through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

**C** Amen.

# ✠ MEAL ✠

## PEACE OF CHRIST

☞ The peace of the Lord be with you always.

☛ **And also with you.**

*We greet one another in the name of the Lord.*

*We sit.*

**OFFERING/ANTHEM:** The First Mercy

Peter Warlock  
Orchestrated by Michael D. Costello

Ox and ass at Bethlehem  
On a night, ye know of them.  
We were only creatures small,  
Hid by shadows on the wall.

We were swallow, moth and mouse;  
The Child was born in our house,  
And the bright eyes of us three  
Peeped at his nativity.

Hands of peace upon that place  
Hushed our beings for a space.  
Quiet feet and folded wing,  
Nor a sound of anything.

With a moving star we crept  
Closer when the baby slept;  
Men who guarded where He lay  
Moved to frighten us away.

But the Babe, awakened, laid  
Love on things that were afraid;  
With so sweet a gesture He  
Called us to His company.

Bruce Blunt



*We stand and sing as the gifts are presented.*

**OFFERTORY VERSE:** Psalm 98:4 and 2:7–8

Richard Hillert

All the ends of the earth have seen the victory of our God.  
The Lord said to me, “You are my Son, today I have begotten you.”  
Ask me, and I will make the nations your inheritance,  
and all the ends of the earth your possession.

**OFFERTORY PRAYER**

- A** Let us pray. Merciful Father,
- C** we offer with joy and thanksgiving what you have first given us—  
our selves, our time, and our possessions, signs of your gracious love.  
Receive them for the sake of him who offered himself for us,  
Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

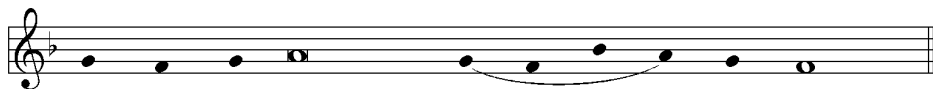
**GREAT THANKSGIVING**



**P** The Lord be with you. **C** And al - so with you.



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



**P** Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.



**C** It is right to give our thanks and praise.

- P** It is indeed right and salutary that we should at all times and in all places offer thanks and praise to you, O Lord, holy Father, through Christ our Lord. 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 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, God of pow'r and might:  
 Heav - en and earth are full of your glo - ry. Ho - san - na. Ho - san - na.  
 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.

**P** Holy God, mighty Lord, gracious Father:  
 Endless is your mercy and eternal your reign.  
 You have filled all creation with light and life;  
 heaven and earth are full of your glory.

We praise you for the grace shown to your people in every age:  
 the promise to Israel, the rescue from Egypt,  
 the gift of the promised land, the words of the prophets;  
 and, at this end of all the ages, the gift of your Son,  
 who proclaimed the good news in word and deed  
 and was obedient to your will, even to giving his life.

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.

For as often as we eat of this bread and drink from this cup,  
 we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

**C** Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

**P** Therefore, O God, with this bread and cup  
we remember the life our Lord offered for us.  
And, believing the witness of his resurrection,  
we await his coming in power to share with us the great and promised feast.

**C Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.**

**P** Send now, we pray, your Holy Spirit,  
that we who share in Christ's body and blood,  
may live to the praise of your glory  
and receive our inheritance with all your saints in light.

**C Amen. Come, Holy Spirit.**

**P** Join our prayers with those of your servants of every time and every place,  
and unite them with the ceaseless petitions of our great high priest  
until he comes as victorious Lord of all.

**C** Through him, with him, in him, in the u - ni - ty of the  
Ho - ly Spir - it, all hon - or and glo - ry is yours, al -  
might - y Fa - ther, now and for - ev - er. A - men

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

**C** 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.

**P** The gifts of God for the people of God.

**C** Thanks be to God.

**P** Come, for all is now ready.

*We sit.*

## AGNUS DEI



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.

## COMMUNION

*Our Lord Jesus Christ welcomes you to this meal of the baptized.*

*The crucified and risen Christ is present in the Lord's Supper, giving us his true body and blood as food and drink.*

*We receive communion at the head of the center aisle, receiving the consecrated bread and then drinking directly from the chalice or dipping the bread into the wine (intinction).*

*Those choosing individual cups will find non-alcoholic wine in the center of the tray.*

*Those with a gluten allergy may ask the pastor for a gluten-free host.*



## MUSIC FOR THE COMMUNION

CANTATA: *Christen, ätzet diesen Tag*, BWV 63  
(Christians, engrave this day)

Johann Sebastian Bach

### 4. RECITATIVE (Tenor)

So kehret sich nun heut

**Thus today will be transformed**

Das bange Leid,

**The anxious suffering,**

Mit welchem Israel geängstet und beladen,

**With which Israel was frightened and burdened,**

In lauter Heil und Gnaden.

**Into pure salvation and grace.**

Der Löw aus Davids Stamme ist erschienen,

**The Lion from David's stem has appeared,**

Sein Bogen ist gespannt, das Schwert ist schon gewetzt,

**His bow is stretched, his sword already sharpened,**

Womit er uns in vor'ge Freiheit setzt.

**With which he sets us in our former freedom.**

In this architecturally symmetrical cantata, movement four forms the central point. (See the background notes on pages 24 and 25 of this folder.) A scholar of the Lutheran liturgy and a noted Bach authority, Robin A. Leaver, points out that at the center of the movement, the music slows to *Andante* for the word *Gnaden* (grace or blessing) in order to draw attention to the importance of this central concept of Lutheran doctrine.

5. **ARIA** (Alto & Tenor)

Ruft und fleht den Himmel an,

**Call and entreat heaven,**

Kommt, ihr Christen, kommt zum Reihen,

**Come, you Christians, come to the ranks,**

Ihr sollt euch ob dem erfreuen,

**You should for that rejoice,**

Was Gott hat anheut getan!

**Which God has done today!**

Da uns seine Huld verpfeget

**Because his grace feeds us**

Und mit so viel Heil beleget,

**And grants us so much salvation,**

Daß man nicht g'nug danken kann.

**That we cannot thank him enough.**

The duet matches movement three in shape, except that here the strings instead of an oboe and *continuo* provide the accompaniment. The instruments begin the triple-meter, almost dance-like motion, with a melodic figure picked up by the singers who then imitate and extend it, proceeding sometimes with, sometimes without the strings. *Reihen* (in order or advancing) and *danken* (thanks) are set to the extended duet motion of sweet parallel thirds and sixths.

6. **RECITATIVE** (Bass)

Verdoppelt euch demnach, ihr heißen Andachtsflammen,

**Therefore be redoubled, you hot flames of devotion,**

Und schlagt in Demut brünstiglich zusammen!

**And beat with humility ardently together!**

Steigt fröhlich himmelan

**Climb joyfully to heaven**

Und danket Gott vor dies, was er getan!

**And thank God for what he has done!**

In this architectural complement to movement two, the singer gives ardent but general thanks to God, accompanied by the punctuating, rhythmic (even “flaming”?) chords of the oboes and strings. Again, the events of the Nativity are not mentioned.

## 7. CHORUS

Höchster, schau in Gnaden an  
**Highest, look with grace upon**  
Diese Glut gebückter Seelen!  
**This glow of souls bowing!**  
Laß den Dank, den wir dir bringen,  
**Let the thanks, which we bring you,**  
Angenehme vor dir klingen,  
**Pleasingly resound before you,**  
Laß uns stets in Segen gehn,  
**Let us always go with your blessing,**  
Aber niemals nicht geschehn,  
**But never let it happen,**  
Daß uns der Satan möge quälen.  
**That Satan may torment us.**

The trumpets return to join the other instruments in a spirited concluding chorus that is a complement to the opening chorus. The text offers both praise to God and a plea to be protected from the devil's torments. Each family of instruments announces its presence before the chorus enters; soon a double fugue emerges, sung at first by the choir without accompaniment. The instruments reiterate their beginning announcement twice before the plea to be delivered from Satan is set in rich harmonies that include a tortured line of descending chromatic half-steps at the mention of Satan's torments. The *da capo* repetition of the beginning brings the cantata to a conclusion with the brilliant "announcement" passages for instruments.

*We stand.*

### POST-COMMUNION BLESSING & PRAYER

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

**C** Amen.

**A** Let us pray.

Gracious God, in this meal you have drawn us to your heart,  
and nourished us at your table with food and drink, the body and blood of Christ.  
Now send us forth to be your people in the world,  
and to proclaim your truth this day and evermore;  
through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

**C** Amen.



# ✠ SENDING ✠

## BENEDICTION

☞ Almighty God: Father, ✠ Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever.

☛ Amen.

## SENDING HYMN: Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

(green) LBW #60



1 Hark! The her - ald an - gels sing, "Glo - ry to the new - born king;  
2 Christ, by high - est heav'n a - dored, Christ, the ev - er - last - ing Lord,  
3 Hail the heav'n-born Prince of peace! Hail the Sun of righ - teous - ness!



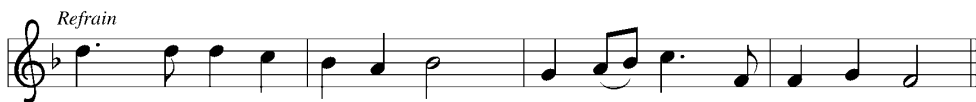
peace on earth, and mer - cy mild, God and sin - ners rec - on - ciled."  
late in time be - hold him come, off - spring of a vir - gin's womb.  
Light and life to all he brings, ris'n with heal - ing in his wings.



Joy - ful, all you na - tions, rise; join the tri - umph of the skies;  
Veiled in flesh the God-head see! Hail, in - car - nate de - i - ty!  
Mild he lays his glo - ry by, born that we no more may die,



with an - gel - ic hosts pro - claim, "Christ is born in Beth - le - hem!"  
Pleased as man with us to dwell, Je - sus, our Em - man - u - el!  
born to raise each child of earth, born to give us sec - ond birth.



Hark! The her - ald an - gels sing, "Glo - ry to the new-born king!"

Text: Charles Wesley, 1707–1788, alt.

Music: MENDELSSOHN, Felix Mendelssohn, 1809–1847; arr. William H. Cummings, 1831–1915

## DISMISSAL

**A** Go in peace. Serve the Lord.

**G** Thanks be to God.

POSTLUDE: *Gaudete* (Rejoice)

Swedish/Finnish Tune  
arr. Matthew Naughtin

## LEADING WORSHIP TODAY

The Rev. Troy E. Medlin, presiding minister

The Rev. David R. Lyle, preaching minister

Val Spiller, deacon

Kathryn Jandeska, Rhea Sprecher, lectors

Paul Nelson, Bible bearer

Julie Hinz, Al Swanson, gift bearers

Catherine Amato, Gerlinde VanDriesen, preparing the altar  
Julie and Dan Lehmann, Michael Nelson, Scott Schwar, ushers

Andrew Costello, Liz Hanson, livestream audio/video

Aryelis Cabral, cover art

### Grace Parish Choir

The Rev. Michael D. Costello, cantor

Marybeth Kurnat, soprano

Amanda Koopman, mezzo soprano

Ryan Townsend Strand, tenor

Douglas Anderson, baritone

Peter Wesoloski, baritone

### Bach Cantata Vespers Orchestra

Christine Janzow Phillips, Meg Busse, Nancy Hagen, oboes

Dianne Ryan, bassoon

Nuttapong Veerapun, Fred Powell, Candace Horton, Annie Grapentine, trumpets

Jon Johnson, timpani

Betty Lewis, Elliot Lee, Dan Galat, violins I

Lisa Fako, Grace Walker, Irina Fatykhova, violins II

Naomi Hildner, Paul Zafer, violas

Jean Hatmker, cello

Douglas Johnson, double bass

Thomas Schmidt, organist

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## BACKGROUND OF THE CANTATA

*Christen, ätzet diesen Tag* (Christians, engrave this day) probably was first performed on Christmas Day in Weimar in 1714. It was first heard in Leipzig on December 25, 1723, as the beginning of much festive music for this, Bach's first Christmas as Cantor at St. Thomas in Leipzig.

Although the cantata text does not describe the events of the Christmas narrative, its music is some of Bach's most exuberant! It was the first of six cantatas composed by Bach for the various festivals that made up the Christmas season in Leipzig: Christmas Day, Second and Third Christmas Days, The Circumcision of Christ (New Year's Day), the Sunday after the Circumcision, and the Epiphany of Our Lord. He also composed his great *Magnificat* and other liturgical music for this season of the church year. To understand this outburst of glorious music performed within just thirteen days, it is helpful to examine the sober Advent context from which it arose.

The spirit of the four weeks of Advent in eighteenth-century Leipzig was grounded in the penitential cleansing of one's sinful life in preparation for the reception of the coming Christ Child. Such an attitude was reinforced by the dark and often damp days of December that preceded the 25<sup>th</sup>. The cold weather was felt in most homes and certainly penetrated the poorly heated and lighted churches. Also, by modern standards, towns were relatively quiet. Of course, there were no automobiles, no radios, televisions, or telephones, no amplified sound of any kind. Religious leaders, with the concurrence of civic officials, articulated the somber, penitential mood of the season. During Advent there were to be no weddings, social affairs, or parties. Pastors encouraged people to examine their lives, to ask for forgiveness, and amend their sinful ways. The Advent lessons read in church, as well as the sermons, prayers, and hymns, drew attention to the coming judgment and the end of all things as motivation for the penitential preparation for Christ's coming. To reinforce the sobriety of the season, the organ was not played in services and no special music or cantatas were performed during Advent.

With the coming of December 25 in Leipzig all of that changed. While the days may have continued to be cold and the daylight hours short, spirits were revived at the thought of the imminent arrival of the newborn Savior. Social restrictions were relaxed and spirits were revived. Christmas trees were lighted and, for the next twelve days especially, joyful music, hymns, and cantatas were to resound in church. It is in this atmosphere that the joyful themes of Cantata 63 were heard on Christmas Day in 1723.

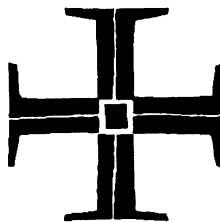
The Epistle for Christmas Day was Isaiah 9:2–7, “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light,” or Titus 2:11–14, “For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all.” The Christmas Gospel was St. Luke 2:2–7, relating the familiar account of Jesus’ birth. The Hymn of the Day, not found in the cantata, was “All Praise to You, Eternal Lord,” (LBW 48, sung as the Hymn of the Day today in a different translation).

On its way to becoming a beloved Leipzig Christmas cantata, the present work has a curious pre-history. Musicological research, including dating of manuscript paper, suggests that it was composed in Weimar, probably for Christmas 1714. The cantata is unusual as Christmas music in that the chorus texts are of a general laudatory nature and that only the recitatives relate directly to the Nativity. There is some evidence, but no solid proof, that the cantata also might have been performed in Halle for a 1717 Reformation Festival with a text appropriate for that occasion. It seems clear that the authorship of the Reformation version of the text (which may have preceded the Christmas adaptation) may have been the Halle pastor, Johann Michael Heineccius, while the poet of the Christmas text remains unknown. Bach must have liked the Christmas version, for it was scheduled for other later performances in Leipzig.

As a whole, the seven movements of the cantata are shaped to form a grand arch that reaches its climax in movement four, a recitative. Duet arias are placed on either side of this central recitative, and these, in turn, are flanked by recitatives. To complete the structural arch, one of Bach’s favorite formal designs, large choruses mark the beginning and the end of the work. Thus, the cantata comes to a conclusion without the customary chorale.

The festive nature of the cantata is signaled by the size of the orchestra, one of the largest specified by Bach: 4 trumpets and timpani, 3 oboes, bassoon, strings (2 violins, viola, cello), *basso continuo* (keyboard and bass) four-part chorus, and soprano, alto, tenor, and bass solos.

Carlos Messerli



## **CHRISTMAS WORSHIP AT GRACE**

### **First Sunday of Christmas, December 31**

10:00 a.m. Holy Communion

### **New Year's Eve, December 31**

7:00 p.m. Holy Communion

### **The Name of Jesus, January 1**

10:00 a.m. Holy Communion

### **The Epiphany of Our Lord, January 6**

7:00 p.m. Holy Communion

## **POINSETTIAS**

### **Chancel poinsettias are sponsored by the following individuals:**

Neal and Esther Armstrong

Bryan and Linda Bernard

Josh and Joanna Schubkegel

George Schwandt

Jane Andrew, in memory of Mary Ellen and Russell Andrew, Frank and Rose Andrew and Helen Grote Stahl

Larry and Carolyn Garber, in memory of their parents

The Prinz Family, in memory of Andrew

John and Marge Sanger, in memory of Robert Sanger

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*Bring in, build up, and send out disciples for Jesus Christ*

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**Troy E. Medlin**, Associate Pastor  
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**William Koehne**, Principal  
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