

# Nativity of the Lord

## Christmas Eve / Morning / Day, All Years

### December 24, 25

**Color:** White or Gold

**Scriptures:** [Scripture linked to NRSV at [Oremus Bible Browser](#)]

Proper I

[Isaiah 9:2-7](#) (*The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light*)

[Psalm 96](#) (*Let the heavens be glad; let the earth rejoice*)

[Titus 2:11-14](#) (*The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all*)

[Luke 2:1-14, \(15-20\)](#) (*The Christmas story*)

Proper II

[Isaiah 62:6-12](#) (*Great expectation and rejoicing: Salvation comes to the people*)

[Psalm 97](#) (*The Lord is king! Let the earth rejoice; the many coastlands be glad!*)

[Titus 3:4-7](#) (*When the goodness and lovingkindness of our Savior appeared*)

[Luke 2:\[1-7\] 8-20](#) (*The birth of the Messiah revealed to shepherds*)

Proper III

[Isaiah 52:7-10](#) (*Heralding a time of joy and deliverance from God*)

[Psalm 98](#) (*All the ends of the earth have seen the victory of our God*)

[Hebrews 1:1-4 \[5-12\]](#) (*God has spoken to us by a Son*)

[John 1:1-14](#) (*The Word became flesh and lived among us*)

**Themes:** Light, Joy, Grace, Salvation, Incarnation, the Birth of Jesus

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*Moonless darkness stands between.  
Past, the Past, no more be seen!  
But the Bethlehem-star may lead me  
To the sight of Him  
Who freed me  
From the self that I have been.*

*Make me pure, Lord: Thou art holy;  
Make me meek, Lord: Thou wert lowly;  
Now beginning, and alway:  
Now begin, on Christmas Day.*

—GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS (1844–1889)

## HYMN SUGGESTIONS

Hymn Suggestions link to [Hymnary.org](http://Hymnary.org), a searchable resource with a wealth of information. The tunes listed here are the ones most commonly associated with the texts, and the biblical/thematic references suggest the hymn's association with the scriptures or themes of this service.

<a href="#">Angels We Have Heard on High</a> (GLORIA) .....	Luke
<a href="#">Away in a Manger</a> (MUELLER; CRADLE SONG).....	Luke
<a href="#">The First Nowell</a> (THE FIRST NOWELL).....	Luke
<a href="#">Go, Tell It On the Mountain</a> (GO TELL IT).....	Luke
<a href="#">Good Christian Friends, Rejoice</a> (IN DULCI JUBILO) .....	Luke
<a href="#">Hark! The Herald Angels Sing</a> (MENDELSSOHN) .....	Isaiah, Luke
<a href="#">He Is Born</a> (IL EST NÉ) .....	Titus, Luke
<a href="#">Joy to the World</a> (ANTIOCH).....	Isaiah, Psalms, Luke
<a href="#">Love Came Down at Christmas</a> (GARTAN) .....	Luke
<a href="#">Love Has Come</a> (BRING A TORCH).....	Isaiah, Luke
<a href="#">O Come, All Ye Faithful</a> (ADESTE FIDELES) .....	Psalms, Luke
<a href="#">O Little Town of Bethlehem</a> (ST. LOUIS) .....	Isaiah, Titus, Luke
<a href="#">O Splendor of God's Glory Bright</a> (PUER NOBIS) .....	Hebrews
<a href="#">Of the Father's Love Begotten</a> (DIVINUM MYSTERIUM) .....	John
<a href="#">On Christmas Night All Christians Sing</a> (SUSSEX CAROL) .....	Isaiah, Titus, Luke
<a href="#">Shine, Jesus, Shine</a> (SHINE, JESUS, SHINE) .....	John
<a href="#">Silent Night, Holy Night</a> (STILLE NACHT).....	Luke
<a href="#">What Child is This</a> (GREENSLEEVES).....	Luke

# ANTHEMS

*E = Easy, M = Moderate, MD = Moderately Difficult*

**Before the Marvel of This Night** – M ..... Luke  
Carl Schalk  
© 1982, Augsburg Fortress, 978-0-8006-4603-5  
SATB, Organ

**Child of My Heart** – E ..... Luke  
Scottish Traditional/Marty Haugen, arr.  
© 1992, GIA Publications, G-3804  
Unison, Keyboard, 2 C-Instruments

**How Far Is It to Bethlehem** – E ..... Luke  
Stowey/Alice Parker & Robert Shaw, arr.  
© 1961, Lawson Gould, LG51017  
SATB, a cappella

**Nativity Carol** – M ..... Luke  
John Rutter  
© 1967, Oxford University Press, 9780193429703  
SATB, Organ

**Night of Silence** – M ..... Isaiah, Titus, Luke  
Daniel Kantor, incorporating “Silent Night”  
© 1984, GIA Publications, G-2760  
Unison with Descant, Keyboard

**O Little Town of Bethlehem** – E ..... Titus, Luke  
Ken Berg  
© 2002, Choristers Guild, CGA 923  
SAB, Piano

**The People Who Walked in Darkness** – E ..... Isaiah  
*UNE JEUNE PUCELLE*/Jane Southwick Cool, arr.  
© 2005, Augsburg Fortress, 978-0-8006-7740-4  
SAB, Piano, Handbells

**Rú, Rú, Chíu, Manger Birds are Winging** – E ..... Luke  
Spanish Carol/Hal H. Hopson, arr.  
© 2002, MorningStar Music, 50-1091  
2-Part Mixed, Piano, opt. Tambourine

**Sing a New Song** – E ..... Psalms  
Heinrich Schutz/Carolyn Jennings, arr.  
© 1975, CPP Belwin, SCHCH 07601  
SATB, Flute, Bass

**Still, Still, Still** – E ..... Luke  
Austrian Carol/Norman Luboff, arr.  
© 1960, Walton Music, W3003  
SATB, Piano

– Children and Youth –

**How Far Is It to Bethlehem** – E ..... Luke  
Stowey/William Schoenfeld, arr.  
© 1989, GIA Publications, G-3181  
Unison, Piano

**Sing We Nowell!** – E ..... Luke  
Terry D. Taylor  
© 2016, Choristers Guild, CGA 1474  
Unison, Keyboard, opt. Handbells or Handchimes (6)

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## ADDITIONAL MATERIAL (Prayers, Poems, Quotes & Liturgies)

*And at night we win to the ancient inn  
Where the child in the frost is furl'd,  
We follow the feet where all souls meet  
At the inn at the end of the world.*

— G.K. CHESTERTON (1874-1936)

*Welcome all wonders in one sight!  
Eternity shut in a span.  
Summer in winter, day in night,  
heaven in earth and God in man.  
Great little one whose all-embracing birth  
brings earth to heaven, stoops heaven to earth.*

— RICHARD CRASHAW (1613-1649)

## CALL TO WORSHIP

(Psalm 96; Luke 2:1-14 (15-20))

Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice!

**There is good news of great joy for all people.**

Sing to the Lord a new song, sing to the Lord, all the earth!

**Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace!**

The Lord is coming.

**Christ is here! Thanks be to God!**

—Laura Edgar\*

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## CALL TO WORSHIP

(Luke 2:1-20 and *O Little Town of Bethlehem*)

One: The story is fresh on our hearts on this Christmas morn.

Another: They traveled to Bethlehem where Mary gave birth. She and Joseph gazed at the child wrapped in swaddling clothes and wondered what was to come.

One: The nearby shepherds entertained holy visitors as they watched their flocks. They heard of the miraculous birth and ventured out to encounter the tiny and compelling mystery.

Another: As the keepers of sheep found the Christ-child laying in the manger, they knew something amazing had happened. The words they breathed out into the night sky that held the star above was a proclamation beyond their understanding.

**All: With lifted voices and trembling spirits we join them in exclaiming, Glory to God in the highest and peace on earth to all.**

—Ginger Brasher-Cunningham\*

## GATHERING PRAYER

(Psalm 96)

God of Glory, this day we celebrate, for you have given us a new song to sing! It is the song of a loving parent who has shared the most precious gift: their very child. It is the song of a newborn Son, bringing hope and joy to all who will encounter him. It is the song of a Spirit, guiding us to that Son, filling us with peace and wonder. O triune God, on this day we celebrate that you offered yourself, taking on our humanity, and taking our humanity into the divine life. We offer ourselves this day to you. Amen.

—LE

## GATHERING PRAYER

As Mary treasured and pondered that magical night in her heart, we do too. With wonderment and celebration, Holy God, giver of grace, and hope of all, we offer thanks for the one we know as Jesus. As we remember the anticipation for and comfort of the little one wrapped in bands of cloths, empower us to grow as Jesus did into a keeper of peace and champion of justice. With a yearning for equity help us share the story from that little town in Bethlehem as we sing, the hopes and fears of all our years are met in thee tonight!

—GB-C

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## AFTER SCRIPTURE

Glory to God in the highest,  
**and peace to all people on earth.**  
Glory to God in the lowest  
**and peace to all people on earth.**  
This is the word, the Good News of God!  
**Alleluia.**

—WH

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## COMMUNITY PRAYER

(based on Luke 2:1-14 (15-20))

Gracious God, you sent your precious Son to take on our humanity, to be born just as we are born, to live with all the highs and lows of life. As we celebrate your gift of your Son, we pray:

**Glory to God in the highest!**

Redeeming Christ, You came as a tiny baby, born in a humble place, wrapped in simple cloths, and visited by local shepherds. You are the one of whom the angels sang. You are the good news, the great joy!

**Glory to God in the highest!**

Sustaining Spirit, You overshadowed Mary and sustained both her and Joseph on their journey. You inspired the shepherds to seek out the baby, and You filled their hearts with praises!

**Glory to God in the highest!**

Gracious God, Redeeming Christ, and Sustaining Spirit, we celebrate Your gift and grace. May our prayer this day and always be:

**Glory to God in the highest!**

—LE

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The true meaning of Christmas is expressed in the sharing of one's graces in a world in which it is so easy to become callous, insensitive, and hard. Once this spirit becomes part of a [person]'s life, every day is Christmas and every night is freighted with the dawning of fresh, and perhaps holy, adventure.

— Howard Thurman, *The Mood of Christmas & Other Celebrations*, 1985

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## TWO BENEDICTIONS

The One we call Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Prince of Peace is the One who is with us always. Let us know the light of God's love and grace. Let us walk in the light of freedom and joy. Let us work toward the light of justice and peace.

—LE

As the star shines from above and the lights twinkle on the trees,  
may we go out from this place with the inner sparkle of joy.  
In the depths of our hearts,  
may unconditional love be unwrapped.  
As the sun and moon take turns in the sky,  
may we lean into the spirit of Christ that guides us to journey  
with travelers seeking home.  
With welcoming shelter to all we pray,  
Amen.

—GB-C

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\* Thanks to Laura Edgar and Ginger Brasher-Cunningham for their contributions to these liturgies and prayers.

Warren Howell, Editor