



Pilgrim Lutheran Church
Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod
Corner of Broadway and Florey



713 Florey Street
Kilgore, Texas 75662-3503
www.pilgrimlc.org

Rev. Dr. Jayson S. Galler, Pastor
903-984-4333
pastor@pilgrimlc.org

WELCOME! With Readings and Hymns we observe The Eve of The Nativity of Our Lord as a meditative and joyful celebration of the coming of God among us in the person of Jesus Christ, Who, in the words of the Nicene Creed, “for us men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary and was made man”. The Readings especially make clear how God entered into our world in order to redeem it and us. Jesus Christ is the fulfillment both of God’s loving purposes and of His long-standing promises to send a Savior of the world, from the first days of human disobedience unto the humble birth of the Holy Child. The Hymns draw out well that meaning of Jesus’s birth for us. We pray that you will find this service to be an opportunity to reflect on the message of peace and hope given to us in Jesus Christ. The Lord be with you, and Merry Christmas! (* = Please stand if you can do so. Hymn stanzas marked with a Δ generally conclude with an added “Amen.”)

EVE OF THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD 2025 December 24
Christmas Eve Candlelight Service of Readings and Hymns

+++ IN THE NAME OF JESUS +++

Opening Hymn: * “Once in Royal David’s City” **376**

Invocation * (Congregational response: “Amen.”)

Bidding Prayer *

(Each prayer ends with “through Jesus Christ our Lord”, and the congregation responds “Amen.” The Bidding Prayer concludes with the Lord’s Prayer.)

Hymn: * “On Christmas Night All Christians Sing” **377**

First Reading: Genesis 3:1-24

The man and the woman sin; God promises a Savior to bruise the serpent’s head, and God covers their sin.

Hymn: “O Sing of Christ” **362**

Second Reading: Genesis 22:1-19

Abraham in faith offers up his beloved son; God provides a substitute and promises to bless all by the son.

Hymn: “The Lamb” **547**

Third Reading: Isaiah 9:2-7

People walking in darkness see a great light because a Child is born Who will rule and bring peace.

Hymn: “The People That in Darkness Sat” (St.6 *) **412**

Fourth Reading: Isaiah 11:1-9

A Righteous Branch on Whom the Spirit rests brings peace.

Hymn: “Lo, How a Rose E’er Blooming” **359**

Fifth Reading: Luke 1:26-38

Gabriel announces Jesus’s birth to Mary.

Hymn: “From East to West” (St.5 *) **385**

Sixth Reading: Luke 2:1-7

Jesus is humbly born and laid in a manger.

Hymn: “Gentle Mary Laid Her Child” **374**

Seventh Reading: Luke 2:8-20

Angels announce Jesus’ birth to shepherds who come to see.

Hymn: “Go Tell It on the Mountain” **388**

Eighth Reading: Matthew 2:1-12

Gentile magi come to worship the newborn King.

Hymn: “What Child Is This” **370**

Ninth Reading: John 1:1-18

The eternal Word becomes flesh and dwells among us, making God the Father known and giving grace.

Hymn: “O Jesus Christ, Thy Manger Is” **372**

Offering (Offerings placed in the Box in the Narthex before the Service are brought forward. Offerings may still be placed in the Box after the Service.)

(* Candles are lit from the altar to the back, symbolizing Jesus, the Light of the World [John 8:12], entering the world and coming to us. The pastor passes the light to the ushers, who light the candles of the worshipers nearest the aisle. The lighted candle is never tilted but is always held upright when passing the light to the next person’s tilted, unlit candle. Please take extra care with the candles.)

Collect for Christmas Midnight * (Congregational response: “Amen.”)

Benediction * (Congregational response: “Amen.”)

Closing Hymn: * “Silent Night, Holy Night” **363**

(Depart in quiet contemplation of the birth of Christ, the Savior, for you. Once in the Narthex, please extinguish your candle carefully, not blowing the hot wax off the candle, and leave the candle in the box in the Narthex.)

+++ TO GOD ALONE BE THE GLORY +++

About Tonight's Service

Our "Readings and Hymns" service for The Eve of the Nativity of Our Lord is primarily based upon the "Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols" of Kings College, Cambridge, England, but it also includes local and other traditions.

The story of the "Nine Lessons and Carols" goes that Christmas as a national religious festival came to England during its Victorian period, with the introduction of trees from Germany, the sending of cards by way of a newly-established postal service, and an explosion in the writing of Christmas carols, including "Once in Royal David's City". As the demand grew over time for a special church service incorporating lessons and carols, Edward White Benson, then bishop of the southwestern English diocese of Truro, devised such a service for Christmas Eve 1880, including the participation of the various ranks of clergy in the church. Benson went on to be archbishop of Canterbury, and his service went on to be adopted by King's College, Cambridge. Nearly 40 years later, in 1918, Eric Milner-White, King's College's new chaplain and dean, developed the now well-known and influential format of "Nine Lessons and Carols" that has remained more or less the same there ever since. (For example, "Once In Royal David's City" has opened the service there since 1919.) In Cambridge, choral pieces reflecting the Christmas theme are interspersed among the congregational carols, which each year include a new, specially-commissioned carol. (The BBC traditionally broadcasts the Cambridge service live, and American Public Media usually rebroadcasts it in the United States.)

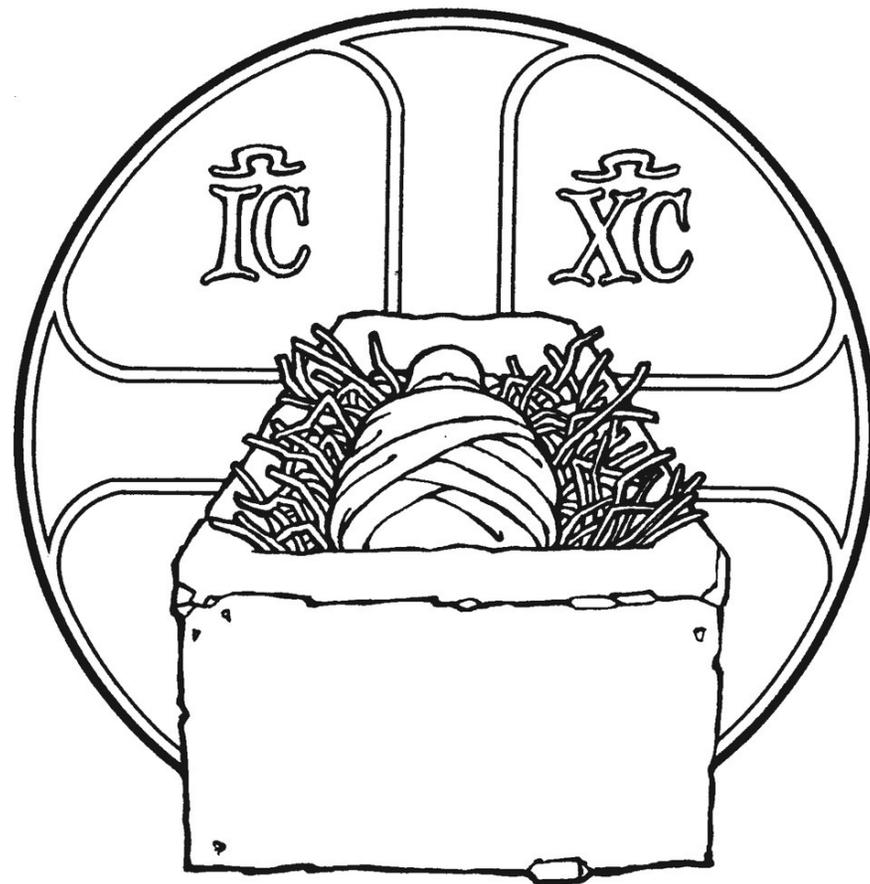
Though Cambridge's basic structure of prayers and readings is being used, we have adapted the service with some modifications for our community. For example, lay elders, who had a more-prominent role leading worship during the congregation's long vacancy prior to Pastor Galler's installation, bid the prayers and read some of the Scripture. In some years, the singing of "From Heaven Above to Earth I Come" with its stanzas distributed honors a German Christmas Eve tradition dating to 1534 or 1535 in the household of The Rev. Dr. Marin Luther, where perhaps The Rev. Dr. Luther himself sang the first five stanzas dressed as an angel, the sixth and fifteenth stanzas were sung by the entire family, and the other stanzas were sung by individual children. Finally, although The Rev. Dr. Luther might object, our service tonight, following the Cambridge structure, does not include a sermon. We rely on the sufficiency of the Holy Spirit, working through God's Word in the Readings and expounded in the hymns, sung confessions of the faith, rightly to apply God's Word of law and Gospel.

+ + + + + + + + +

SERVING US TONIGHT: The Rev. Dr. Jayson S. Galler, Pastor; Pilgrim's Elders, Bidder and Readers; and Elaine Navaille, Accompanist.

ALL ARE INVITED to return in the morning to celebrate The Nativity of our Lord, Christmas Day, with a Divine Service at 10:00 a.m.

The black and white line-art drawing on the front cover is by Lutheran Artist Edward Riojas and is part of a package purchased from Higher Things and donated to Pilgrim for such uses. The "sacred monogram" consists of the first and last letters of the Greek words for "Jesus" and "Christ".



**"Thou Christian heart, Who-e'er thou art,
Be of good cheer and let no sorrow move thee!
For God's own Child, In mercy mild,
Joins thee to Him; how greatly God must love thee!"**

—Lutheran Service Book 372:4