



★ SCRIPTURE ★ FAITH ★
CHRIST
A SOLA
CHRISTMAS
GRACE
★ GLORY BE TO GOD ★

December 24, 2017

9:00 a.m.

Children's Christmas Service

St. Mark's is a member of the
Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod



Pastor Aaron Nitz
Principal Nathan Bitter
2220 Anne St NW, Bemidji, MN 56601
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Welcome to God's House of Worship!

Welcome and thank you for joining us for worship today! In our service we gather before our almighty and saving God to offer him our worship and praise. We also assemble to hear God's holy and powerful word. This morning the children have the privilege to proclaim the Christmas message in Word and song under the theme: "A Sola Christmas". We pray that our service will be a blessing for you and that your heart will be filled with the joy Jesus gives to you!

A few notes:

- *Out of reverence and respect for God's Word, we ask that no pictures be taken during our worship service.*
- The order of worship is found in this folder.
- Restrooms are located in the foyer.
- Our fellowship hall is equipped with a speaker and child-friendly toys.

A "Sola" Christmas

A "Sola" Christmas is a children's service whose sections focus on the five solas of the Reformation: *Scripture Alone, Faith Alone, Grace Alone, Christ Alone, and To God Alone Be the Glory*. The traditional Christmas recitations are paired with these solas of the Reformation, with supplemental related passages from throughout the Bible that highlight the connections between these foundational Reformation concepts and the specifics of the Christmas account. Our service this morning also includes Martin Luther's Christmas hymn "From Heaven Above to Earth I Come."

A Children's Christmas Service Focusing on the "Solas" of the Reformation

PROCESSIONAL HYMN

"Let the Earth Now Praise the Lord" (CW 28)

Congregation: 1. Let the earth now praise the Lord, Who has truly kept his word
And at last to us did send Christ, the sinner's help and friend.

2. What the fathers most desired, What the prophets' heart inspired,
What they longed for many a year Stands fulfilled in glory here.

Children: 3. Abram's promised great reward, Zion's helper, Jacob's Lord—
Him of twofold race behold—Truly came, as long foretold.

4. Welcome, O my Savior, now! Joyful, Lord, to you I bow.
Come into my heart, I pray; Oh, prepare yourself a way.

5. Crush for me the serpent's head That, set free from doubt and dread,
I may cling to you in faith, Safely kept through life and death,

All stand

to sing: 6. And, when you shall come again As a glorious king to reign,
I with joy may see your face, Freely ransomed by your grace.

INVOCATION

Minister: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Congregation: Amen.

RESPONSIVE READING

(Psalm 96, selected verses)

M: Sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth.

C: **Sing to the LORD, praise his name; proclaim his salvation day after day.**

M: Declare his glory among the nations,
C: his marvelous deeds among all peoples.
M: Ascribe to the LORD, all you families of nations,
C: ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.
M: Worship the LORD in the splendor of his holiness;
C: tremble before him, all the earth.
M: Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad;
C: let the sea resound, and all that is in it.
M: Let all creation rejoice before the LORD, for he comes,
C: he comes to judge the earth.
M: He will judge the world in righteousness
C: and the peoples in his faithfulness.

Be seated

SERMONETTE

CONGREGATIONAL HYMN

“From Heaven Above to Earth I Come”
(CW 38 v.1-5)

1. "From heav'n above to earth I come
To bear good news to ev'ry home;
Glad tidings of great joy I bring,
Whereof I now will say and sing:
2. "To you this night is born a child
Of Mary, chosen virgin mild;
This little child of lowly birth
Shall be the joy of all the earth.
3. "This is the Christ, our God most high,
Who hears your sad and bitter cry;
He will himself your Savior be
From all your sins to set you free.

4. **"He will on you the gifts bestow
Prepared by God for all below,
That in His kingdom, bright and fair,
You may with us His glory share.**

5. **"These are the signs which you shall mark:
The swaddling clothes and manger dark;
There you will find the infant laid
By whom the heav'ns and earth were made."**

Introduction

We all know how important a solid foundation is for a building. A building with a weak foundation may stand for a time, but eventually it will topple. Today, we once again hear the account of the birth of Jesus. Why do we set aside time to do this every year? The answer is that this is an important brick in the foundation of our faith. Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 3:11, "No one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ." As we close out the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, we are reminded how God used Martin Luther to restore to the church the true teachings of Scripture. Luther summarized those teachings in five short statements: *By Scripture Alone, By Faith Alone, Through Christ Alone, To God's Glory Alone, and By Grace Alone*. These phrases form the foundation of the Lutheran Church, and because they are rooted in Scripture, they form the foundation of the Christian faith.

Part One: By Scripture Alone (Sola Scriptura)

When the earth was new and people lived for hundreds of years, information was passed down from one generation to the next by word of mouth. Many generations were able to talk directly with Adam and Eve about the Garden of Eden,

their fall into sin, and God’s promise of a Savior. As the first people began dying and the number of generations increased, it became necessary to record God’s promises. God tells us through his disciple Peter how this took place:

2 Peter 1:20,21

So how do we know that the baby whose birth we are celebrating is our Savior? Because Scripture tells us. That news can be found nowhere else but in God’s Word. God gave his people prophecies—pictures of coming events—so they would recognize the Messiah when he came.

Genesis 3:15

Isaiah 7:14

Micah 5:2

Jeremiah 33:14-16

CHILDREN’S HYMN

“Go, Tell It on the Mountain” (CW 57)

Part Two: By Faith Alone, Through Christ Alone (Sola Fide, Solus Christus)

In the 11th chapter of the letter to the Hebrews, we find a definition for faith: “Faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.” When we receive unsettling news, our reaction might be to doubt the truth of this news. Today we see in Mary an example of a strong faith as she reacts to some potentially startling news.

Luke 1:26-38

Mary was chosen by God to give birth to the Savior. Mary was not special in and of herself, but by faith—a gift of the Holy Spirit—she trusted God and his Word. Many people today say they have faith, but too often it is in someone or something that provides no lasting foundation. Scripture tells us that there is only one sure foundation for our faith—Jesus Christ.

John 14:6

Acts 4:12

Thousands of years after making the first promise of a Savior, God finally sent the Messiah. Listen again to those familiar words proclaiming Jesus' birth:

Luke 2:1-7

CHILDREN'S HYMN

"Away in a Manger" (CW 68)

Pre-K—2nd grade

Part Three: To God's Glory Alone (Soli Deo Gloria)

Matthew, the author of the first book of the Bible's New Testament, records the angel's instructions to Joseph concerning Mary's child:

Matthew 1:21

We have no part in saving ourselves. The Bible tells us we are saved through Christ alone. So we give God alone all the glory in thankfulness for sending his Son to save us. Yes, today we see a humble baby in a manger; but the apostle Paul reminds us in his letter to the Philippians of Jesus' honored place:

Philippians 2:9-11

The angels gave us a good example when they praised God after telling the shepherds the news of Jesus' birth.

Luke 2:8-14

HYMN

"Hark! The Herald Angels Sing" (CW 61)

Children: 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 th' angelic host proclaim, "Christ is born in Bethlehem!"
Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King!"

Please stand to sing

Congregation: 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 th' incarnate Deity!
Pleased as man with us to dwell, Jesus, our Immanuel!
Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King!"**

3. **Hail, the heav'nly 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 us from the earth, Born to give us second birth.
Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn King!"**

Be seated

Part Four: By Grace Alone (Sola Gratia)

In the next few days many of you will be opening your Christmas gifts. What did you do to earn those gifts? The moment we do something to earn them, they are no longer gifts. Out of love for us, God gave the most precious gift on that first

Christmas night—the Savior who lived a perfect life and suffered and died to pay for our sins. Our sinful nature wants nothing to do with God and his precious gift. Despite that fact, God loves us still. God’s love is undeserved. That is GRACE! The apostle Paul reminds us:

Ephesians 2:8,9

After you have opened your gifts, do you keep quiet about them? Or do you tell all your friends what you have received? When the shepherds saw God’s gift to the world, they did not keep the news to themselves. They spread the word so that others could experience God’s grace too!

Luke 2:15-20

CONGREGATIONAL HYMN

“From Heaven Above to Earth I Come”
(CW 38 v.6-11)

6. **How glad we’ll be to find it so!
Then with the shepherds let us go
To see what God for us has done,
In sending us his own dear Son.**

7. **Come here, my friends, lift up your eyes,
And see what in the manger lies.
Who is this child, so young and fair?
It is the Christchild lying there.**

8. **Welcome to earth, O noble Guest,
Through whom the sinful world is blest!
You came to share my misery
That you might share your joy with me.**

(continued on the next page)

9. Ah, Lord, though you created all,
How weak you are, so poor and small,
That you should choose to lay your head
Where lowly cattle lately fed!
10. Were earth a thousand times as fair
And set with gold and jewels rare,
It would be far too poor and small
A cradle for the Lord of all.
11. Instead of soft and silken stuff
You have but hay and straw so rough,
On which as King, so rich and great,
To be enthroned in royal state.

OFFERTORY

“Oh, Come, All Ye Faithful”

OFFERING & FRIENDSHIP REGISTERS

The members of St. Mark's have joined together to spread God's message both in this community and around the world. If you are a visitor, please do not feel obligated to participate in the offering. You are our guests, and we thank you for giving us the opportunity to share God's Word with you! Please take a moment to sign our friendship register.

Please stand

RESPONSIVE PRAYER

- M: God our Wonderful Counselor, in your Word you reveal to us who you are and what we are.
- C: **Through your Scriptures alone you show us that you are righteous and we are not. You show us that you are love and that we are forgiven.**

- M: Mighty God, you provide us with certain hope and redeem us from our sin.
- C: Through faith alone we hold to your promises, and through Christ alone we receive salvation.**
- M: Everlasting Father, you rule the universe, the church, and the hearts of your people.
- C: To you alone belongs all glory and praise!**
- M: Prince of Peace, your love covers us and fills us and moves us.
- C: Through grace alone we receive new life and eternal hope.**
- M: Faithful God, move us to rejoice in our salvation and to share eagerly this Good News with others.
- C: Help us to live for you through Scripture alone, by faith alone, in Christ alone, under grace alone, and to your glory alone. Amen.**

LORD'S PRAYER

- C: Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins,
as we forgive those
who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and forever. Amen.**

BENEDICTION

M: The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.

The Lord look on you with favor and (+) give you peace.

C: **Amen.**

Be seated

HYMN

“From Heaven Above to Earth I Come”

(CW 38 v.12-15)

Congregation: **12. And so it pleases you to see
This simple truth revealed to me:
That all the world’s wealth, honor, might
Are weak and worthless in your sight.**

Children: 13. Ah, dearest Jesus, holy Child,
Prepare a bed, soft, undefiled
Within my heart, made clean and new,
A quiet chamber kept for you.

14. My heart for very joy must leap;
My lips no more can silence keep.
I, too, must sing with joyful tongue
That sweetest ancient cradle song:

15. Glory to God in highest heaven,
Who unto us his Son has given!
While angels sing with pious mirth
A glad new year to all the earth.

RECESSIONAL CONGREGATIONAL HYMN

“Joy to the World” (CW 62)

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 sins and sorrows 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.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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WELCOME!

If this is your first time worshipping with St. Mark's, we pray it will be the first of many times! If you have questions, please feel free to speak with Pastor Nitz or one of the members. Materials are available in the entry; take as much as you'd like.



IN OUR PRAYERS

Janet Bitzer (with health concerns)
Sally Carroll (with health concerns)
Kevin Peterson (with health concerns—cancer)
Milo Holderbecker (with health concerns)
The Ricci family
The Stinar family
Befriend-a-Mission for Nov/Dec: East Fork Lutheran School in AZ

ATTENDANCE LAST WEEK

Early: 76 Late: 71 Total: 147

YOUR GIFTS OF LOVE FOR JESUS

"Just as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us—see that you also excel in this grace of giving." (2 Corinthians 8:7)

Contributions last week \$6,165
Contributions needed each week \$5,122
Contributions year to date \$252,641
Budget year to date \$247,978
Amount borrowed from savings to meet expenses \$0

SERVING THE LORD AND US

Organist: Jody Bitter
Greeters: Nathaniel & Rachelle B., James & Sheri E.
Ushers for December: J. Mathweg, R. Kuehn, L. Tasa, A. Tasa, B. Matzke, B. Boe
Church cleaning for 12/30: L. Tasa/A. Tasa/Solheim/Granger/T. Mack

Announcements

FINANCIAL PEACE UNIVERSITY

St. Mark's will be hosting another Financial Peace University class. Financial Peace University is Dave Ramsey's step-by-step course that teaches you how to become debt free and in control of your personal finances. This 9-week course will meet on Tuesday evenings at 7 pm beginning January 9th. The cost of the class is \$109. If you are unsure about making the commitment because of the cost, you are welcome to attend the first class for free to see what it is all about. Please sign up in the narthex, and see Kyle Riess if you have any questions.

ALTAR GUILD

We are looking for women who would like to serve on the Altar Guild in 2018. If you have never served on the Altar Guild before, don't be shy, sign up with someone who has done it before and they will show you what needs to be done. Please sign up in the narthex.

A MESSAGE FROM THE ELDERS ABOUT THE COMMUNION RAIL

The Elders have been discussing the recent changes of how communion is being distributed at St Mark's. Currently the communion rail has been removed due to a temporary need for room up front for the Children's Christmas Service. It will be reinstalled after the last Sunday of December. The Elders want to take this opportunity to continue giving the bread and wine to communicants while they stand. Pastor will be assisted by two congregational leaders when available. There will be a pause between the distribution of the bread and wine. We will be surveying the communicants in early January for their preferences to help us in our consideration for how we distribute communion in the future. We understand there will be different opinions. Taking the Lord's Supper should be done in a way that one has time to acknowledge and examine one's sins and appreciate the forgiveness God gives us in the Supper before coming to the table. A way to prepare for the Lord's Supper is found in the front of the hymnal on page 156. Your comments are welcome anytime. 2018 Elders are Ken Grob, Darold Krenz, Doug Kranich, and Lou Tasa.



Merry Christmas

Dec 24 (Sun)...	8:45 a.m.	Special pre-service music
	9:00 a.m.	Children's Christmas Service
	7:00 p.m.	Christmas Eve Candlelight Worship
Dec 25 (Mon)...	9:00 a.m.	Christmas Day Worship
Dec 31 (Sun)...	8:00 a.m.	Worship
	10:30 a.m.	Worship

CONTACT INFORMATION

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St. Mark's Mission Statement

We, the members of St. Mark's, are a Christ-centered church family that will **glorify** God, **grow** in His Word, and **go** with it to all.
(1 Corinthians 10:31, 2 Peter 3:18, Matthew 28:18-20)