

**December 24, 2023**

*Fourth Sunday of Advent*

Led by the Holy Spirit, LaGrave's members seek to worship and serve God in all of life, transforming His world and being transformed to reflect the character of Christ.

Welcome to worship at LaGrave. Because our worship proceeds without announcements, please carefully follow the order of worship printed below, noting that we use *two* different red hymnals. The *Worship & Rejoice* hymnal will be indicated by bold, italic type. An asterisk (\*) denotes standing for those who are able. We are glad that you are here. Let us worship God together.

**MORNING WORSHIP 10:00 AM**

*Please prepare your heart and mind for worship with a time of prayer and meditation.*

***God Calls Us to Worship***

The Prelude:

“Gesù Bambino”

Pietro Yon, arr. Karen Smith and David Snyder

“It Came upon the Midnight Clear”

Richard Willis, arr. Karen Smith and David Snyder

“What Child Is This?/Coventry Carol”

16<sup>th</sup> Century English Melody,  
arr. Karen Smith and David Snyder

The Chiming of the Hour

The Introit:

“Infant Holy, Infant Lowly”

*Infant holy, infant lowly, for his bed a cattle stall; oxen lowing, little knowing Christ the Babe is Lord of all. Swift are winging angels singing, noels ringing, tidings bringing: Christ the Babe is Lord of all.*

*Flocks were sleeping, shepherds keeping vigil till the morning new saw the glory, heard the story, tidings of a gospel true. Thus rejoicing, free from sorrow, praises voicing greet the morrow: Christ the Babe was born for you.*

\*The Processional Hymn: Lift Up Your Hearts 87

“Once in Royal David's City”  
*sing verse 4 a cappella*

\*The Greeting

\*The People's Response: **Amen.**

The Welcome

***We Humbly Approach God***

The Reading

Jesus said, “I am the light of the world; the one who follows me will not walk in darkness but have the light of life.”

**We light this candle as a sign of the coming light of Christ.**

The Lighting of the Advent Candle

The Reading: Isaiah 58:8

The Sung Response:

**Emmanuel, Emmanuel, his name is called Emmanuel.**

**God with us, revealed in us, his name is called Emmanuel.**

Worship & Rejoice 178 Words: Bob McGee ©1976 C.A. Music.  
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The Prayer of Confession:

**God of light, we confess that often the darkness is so strong that we fail to imagine a way out. We need your Holy Spirit to guide us into truth and light. When our spirits are faint and our bodies weary, remind us that someday you will return with hope and healing. Jesus, we celebrate your coming and join with the heavenly hosts singing, "Glory to the newborn King." Amen.**

The Words of Forgiveness: based on 1 John 1:5-7

God is light; in him is no darkness at all.

**If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth.**

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

**In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven.**

\*The Hymn of Commitment: Lift Up Your Hearts 80:1,3

“Hark! The Herald Angels Sing”

***We Respond with Thanksgiving***

The Children's Message

The Pastoral Prayer

The Anthem:

“In the Bleak Midwinter”

arr. Laura Farnell

*In the bleak midwinter frosty wind made moan. Earth stood hard as iron, water like a stone. Snow had fallen, snow on snow, snow on snow. In the bleak midwinter long, long ago.*

*Angels and archangels may have gathered there. Cherubim and seraphim thronged the air; but his mother only, in her maiden bliss, worshipped the holy baby with a kiss.*

*What can I give Him, poor as I am? If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb; if I were a wise man I would do my part, yet what I can I give Him; give Him my heart.*

The Offertory:

“Away in a Manger”

Traditional, arr. Karen Smith and David Snyder

The Offering

\*The Doxology

**Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;  
Praise him, all creatures here below;  
Praise him, above ye heavenly host;  
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.**

***God Speaks to Us***

The Scripture: Genesis 18:10-15, 21:1-7

The Sermon: **“JESUS IN GENESIS: THE BIRTH OF ISAAC”**

The Prayer for Blessing on the Word

\*The Closing Hymn: Lift Up Your Hearts 79

“Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming”

\*The Benediction

\*The People's Response: **Amen.**

\*The Organ Amen

\*The Silent Prayer and Carillon Bells

\*The Postlude:

“Swiss Noel”

Louis Claude Daquin

Rev. Peter Jonker – minister  
Erin Alley – liturgist  
Dr. Larry Visser – organist  
Amber Schaap – flutist  
Jess Hollenbach – pianist  
Jess Hollenbach, Carole Medema, Ginny Medema – vocal trio  
Carmen Day & Marlene Padding – Cross and Bible Bearers

We welcome **Carole Medema** and **Ginny Medema**, mother and sister of LaGrave member **Jess Hollenbach**, who together provide the ministry of music.

### **Music at LaGrave**

Growing up with two brothers, English poet and artist Christina Rossetti (1830-1894) was exposed to high art and literature from a young age. Over half of her writings are devotional in nature. She wrote two Christmas carol texts, *Love Came Down at Christmas* and *In the Bleak Midwinter*. Twelve years after Rossetti's death, English luminary Gustav Holst composed a beautiful hymn tune for the latter poem, still sung around the world. We hear this morning an arrangement of that hymn tune for three women's voices.

**Today is Christmas Eve Sunday and the beginning of Christmastide.** Christmastide is the twelve days following Christmas day. The sanctuary colors of Christmastide are white, purple, and gold. White symbolizes the purity and holiness of Jesus Christ, Son of God. Yet, he is also Jesus Christ, born of a woman, being both God and human. As a human person, Jesus was like us in every respect except he was without sin. Therefore, he was able to take our sins upon himself and redeem us. Purple represents the birth of Jesus but also foreshadows his coming death. All of the colors combine against the background of gold. Gold represents the kingship of Jesus and also our joy and celebration of the Christmas season.

**The Advent Wreath** is a circle which reminds of God who is eternal with no beginning and no end. The four ring candles represent the light of God coming into the world. They also represent the period of waiting during the four Sundays of Advent. The pink candle symbolizes the joy of the eminent coming of the Christ. The white, center candle is the Christ candle. It reminds us that the incarnation is the heart of the Christmas season. Jesus, the light of the world, comes into the darkness of our lives and brings new life and hope.

**The flowers on the chancel today** are given in loving memory of **Rev. Herman Keizer** from his wife, **Ardis Keizer**. Six years ago Herman met his Savior whose name he proclaimed all his days.

**The December special offering** is for **Oakdale Neighbors**, a neighborhood development organization providing youth mentoring and advocacy, tax preparation, financial classes and neighborhood business development assistance.

**Today at 4pm** we will have our family Christmas service. This family-friendly service will include lots of singing, the lighting of the Christ candle, and a simple message about Jesus as the Prince of Peace. Reverend Jonker will lead the service.

**At 11pm** we will enjoy our annual Christmas Eve candlelight service. The chancel choir will sing, the bell choir will ring, and Reverend Jonker will lead the service. The theme of the service is *Dona Nobis Pacem* - a Latin prayer meaning, 'Grant Us Peace.' Come early if you want a seat.

Livestreaming worship is available at [lagrave.org/live](http://lagrave.org/live)