

Christ is Born



Lake Toxaway United Methodist Church
Christmas Eve
Communion and Candlelight Worship

Lake Toxaway United Methodist Church
Communion and Candlelight Service
December 24, 2025
5:00pm



*We have the closed hearing loop system.
You may be able to turn your hearing device to the "T" setting.*

To allow all worshippers to reflect and prepare for the service, please observe silence during the prelude.

Christmas Eve

RINGING OF THE BELL

PRELUDE Comfort Ye, My People G. F. Handel

CALL TO WORSHIP *(Please respond with words in bold)*

Beloved, on this night, we gather to hear the story once again of God who came to dwell among us by being born like us, as a vulnerable baby.

Let us come and behold him.

We remember the stable, the animals, and the manger that witnessed the arrival of Emmanuel, God with us.

Let us come and adore him.

We recall the angels who announced the Messiah's birth to the shepherds, those most unlikely witnesses of God's glory.

Let us come sing his praise.

In our remembering and retelling, we gather as people of God's promise, witnesses to God's glorious presence among us in the vulnerable, forgotten, and tucked away places of the world.

Let us come in faith that God has come

to dwell among us in this child, Christ our Lord.

Thanks be to God.

HYMN #234 O Come, All Ye Faithful vv. 1,2,3,6

LIGHTING THE CHRIST CANDLE *(Please be seated)*

Reader: Throughout the season of Advent, we have gathered around this wreath to light candles. The wreath reminds us of the circle of our human community, and the candles illuminate the many ways in which we bring ourselves to Emmanuel — God with us and God coming to us — as we anticipate the birth of Jesus of Nazareth in Bethlehem long ago.

Reader: We light the Candle of Hope, believing that the time of God's reign has come and is coming among us.

Reader: We light the Candle of Peace, believing that true peace comes when we seek the flourishing of all God's creation.

Reader: We light the Candle of Joy, believing that the day is coming when the people of God shall return home with singing, filled with joy and gladness, and that sorrow and sighing shall be no more.

Reader: We light the Candle of Love, choosing to wait, watch, and listen for the way of Love instead of responding in fear to the world's hatred and judgement.

Reader: Tonight, we light the final candle on the wreath, the candle that proclaims that Christ is born. God is in our midst. In Christ, hope is realized, peace finds a way through, joy is fulfilled, and love has the final word. Our Christmas traditions and stories have meaning, for they are grounded and nurtured in our faith that the Word has been made flesh and dwells among us. On this night, we meet Emmanuel, God with us, lifting us up and giving us His light here, now, and forevermore.

Christmas Prayer

Let us pray together: **Holy God, we have waited for your hope, your joy, your love to shine in the darkness of this world. Even now, we wait for signs of your presence. In our hearts, we still hope that your light will blaze forth in a mighty rush, banishing the shadows of this world and guiding all the people back to you. Yet you did not come into this world in a show of power and glory.**

Instead, you ignited a tiny spark on an otherwise ordinary night, a newborn baby, visible only to parents and curious animals. A host of angels, away from the populated areas, singing to migrant workers. A sparkling star, guiding foreigners to see what neighbors could not. Open our hearts, merciful God, to the tiny sparks of your real presence still in this world. Open our eyes, that we might behold your presence in the least likely of places, and among the least likely of people. Kindle your spark within us, that together we may shine forth your light, banishing the shadows of this world. May our lives be the continuation of the Christmas miracle: the living presence of God in this world. Amen.

HYMN #240 Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Isaiah 9:2-7 *A child is born for us*

²The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness--on them light has shined. ³You have multiplied exultation; you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as people exult when dividing plunder. ⁴For the yoke of their burden and the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian. ⁵For all the boots of the tramping warriors and all the garments rolled in blood shall be burned as fuel for the fire. ⁶For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders, and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷Great will be his authority and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onward and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

Psalm 96 UMH 815 *Shout for joy for the Lord is coming*
(Please respond with the words in bold.)

Titus 2:11-14 *The grace of God has appeared*

¹¹ For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all, ¹² training us to renounce impiety and worldly passions and in the present age to live lives that are self-controlled, upright, and godly, ¹³ while we wait for the blessed hope and the manifestation of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. ¹⁴ He it is who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds.

Luke 2:1-20 *The birth of Jesus*

(Please stand as you are able)

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. ² This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³ All went to their own towns to be registered. ⁴ Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. ⁵ He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. ⁶ While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. ⁷ And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no place in the inn.

⁸ Now in that same region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹ Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰ But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for see, I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: ¹¹ to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹² This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." ¹³ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, ¹⁴ "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"

¹⁵ When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." ¹⁶ So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph and the

child lying in the manger. ¹⁷ When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child, ¹⁸ and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them, ¹⁹ and Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. ²⁰ The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, just as it had been told them.

L: This is the word of the Lord for the people of Christ.

P: Thanks be to God.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Let us confess our sins against God and our neighbor.

(Let us offer our silent confessions.)

Lord Jesus, this most holy of nights brings us gladness, grief, and joy. We are glad, because you left the splendor of Heaven's glory to come to this dark and cold world, to bring the light and warmth of your presence to a world so in need of your love, your peace, your joy. We grieve, because you came into the world, yet the world did not receive You. You came to your own, and your own did not welcome you. And still today, people turn away from you. We turn away from you. Sin still scars your creation and the hearts of your own people. And yet, this night also brings us joy because you offer perfect forgiveness and full cleansing to all who acknowledge their need of you. Cleanse our hearts tonight, Lord Jesus, so that we may welcome you into our lives in the full realization that you have always welcomed us. In the name of Christ, God with us. Amen.

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

Beloved, God has come. Jesus Christ has been born for us. The baby lying in a manger is the fulfillment of God's promise to never leave or forsake us, but to walk with us and help us all the days of our life.

In the name of Jesus Christ, we are forgiven. Thanks be to God!

HOMILY

STATEMENT OF FAITH UMH 883 United Church of Canada (Please stand as you are able)

HYMN OF PREPARATION # 219 What Child is This

THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

(Please respond with words in bold)

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

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

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

The pastor gives thanks and remembers God's acts of salvation, concluding:

"...and so, with your people on earth and all the company of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn":

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might. Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

The pastor continues the thanksgiving. The institution of the Lord's Supper is recalled. The pastor concludes: "...and so, in remembrance of these your mighty acts in Jesus Christ, we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving as a holy and living sacrifice, in union with Christ's offering for us, as we proclaim the mystery of faith":

Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again.

The pastor invokes the present work of the Holy Spirit and then praises the Trinity, concluding: "...all honor and glory is yours, almighty God, now and forever." Amen.

LORD'S PRAYER

BREAKING THE BREAD GIVING THE BREAD AND CUP

MUSICAL OFFERING DURING COMMUNION

Of the Father's Love **Plainsong, Text 5th century**
I Wonder as I Wander **Arr. John Jacob Niles**

COMMUNION PRAYER

Eternal God, we give you thanks for this holy mystery in which you have given yourself to us. Grant that we may go into the world in the strength of your Spirit, to give ourselves to others, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

MUSICAL OFFERING O Holy Night Adolphe Adam

WITNESS TO THE LIGHT—John 1:1-5

(Please stand as you are able)

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

HYMN Silent Night

(As we sing, we will pass the light. Please keep burning wicks upright. Tip the unlighted candles into the burning wick. Please be careful and respectful with the wax around furnishings even as we celebrate the light coming into the world.)

**Silent night, holy night, All is calm, all is bright
Round yon virgin mother and child!
Holy Infant so tender and mild,
Sleep in heavenly peace, Sleep in heavenly peace.**

**Silent night, holy night, Darkness flies, all is light;
Shepherds hear the angels sing, "Alleluia! hail the King!
Christ the Savior is born, Christ the Savior is born."**

**Silent night, holy night, Son of God, love's pure light
Radiant beams from Thy holy face,
With the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth, Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth.**

**Silent night, holy night, Wondrous star, lend the light;
With the angels let us sing, Alleluia to our King;
Christ the Savior is born, Christ the Savior is born.**

LIVING INTO THE LIGHT

We arrived in darkness.

Now we leave in light.

Once, we stumbled, lost and alone.

Now, we walk confidently with God at our side.

Rise up and go in hope, in peace, in joy, and in the abundant love of God, for God has appeared, and his salvation is for all.

May the light of Christ lead us as we journey through all the days to come. Glory to God in the highest!

CLOSING HYMN Joy to the World

**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.**

**Joy to the Earth, the Savior reigns;
Our mortal songs employ,
While fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains,
Repeat the sounding joy.**

**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.**

**He rules the world with truth and grace,
And makes the nations prove
The glories of his righteousness,
And wonders of his love.**

BENEDICTION

CONGREGATIONAL CHORAL RESPONSE

**Go, tell it on the mountain, over the hills and everywhere;
Go, tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ was born.**

**Down in a lowly manger the humble Christ was born,
And God sent us salvation that blessed Christmas morn.**

**Go, tell it on the mountain, over the hills and everywhere;
Go, tell it on the mountain, that Jesus Christ was born.**

POSTLUDE Grand Choeur Theodore Dubois

(Please be seated and extinguish your candle.)

Christ is born!
God is with us!
Alleluia. Amen.

STAFF & LAY VOLUNTEERS

Pastor: Marcus Dodson: 828-553-0282, marcus61dodson@gmail.com

Organist: Bob Kintner: 828-329-2457

Special Music: Jackson Ray

Lay Leaders: Paula Markert: 828-553-9434, Maria Buehler: 828-553-2128

Audio/Visual & Livestream: Joe Haraschak: 813-918-1916

Liturgists: Emilee, Jeremy, Maggie, & Kim Dodson

Christ Candle: The Dodson Family

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Welcome to our guest vocalist, tenor Jackson Ray. Jackson is from Asheville. He is earning his M.M. degree in Vocal Performance at Indiana University. He began his undergraduate studies at Brevard College before completing his degree at The University of North Carolina School of the Arts. Last Season, he debuted with IU Opera Theatre as El Remendado in Carmen. He has performed with the Piedmont Opera and as a soloist in Bach's St. John Passion. Additionally, Jackson is a North Carolina Association Teachers of Singing winner and national semifinalist.

5:00 PM Livestream is available on the LTUMC YouTube channel: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCgtuJe20i8DN7S_Cfg1sWCg

Offerings and Year-End Gifts

Christmas offerings may be left in the collection plates in the back as you leave tonight.

If you are planning on mailing a year-end gift, please be sure to use our mailing address: **Lake Toxaway UMC, P.O. Box 83, Lake Toxaway, NC 28747**. Please let the church know if your winter address has changed by sending an email to pastor@laketoxawayumc.org to ensure your 2025 giving statement gets to you for your taxes. Giving statements will be mailed in the early part of 2026.

The Prayer Ministry meets on the 2nd and 4th Wednesday of each month at 9:30 AM. Prayer requests may be mailed to LTUMCPrayerRequests@gmail.com. We will not be meeting on December 25th but welcome your prayer concerns.

We especially offer prayers tonight for all those missing loved ones during this holy season.

AA Meets Every Thursday Night at 4:45 PM in the Dice Hall. To honor anonymity, please do not go to the Parish building from 4:00-6:00 PM. They will NOT be meeting on Christmas Day.

Worship at Lake Toxaway UMC takes place each Sunday at 10:00am. All are welcome to join us!