

St. Stephen Lutheran Church of the East Bay & Central Valley
(A Congregation of the Church of the Lutheran Confession)
www.ststephenclc.org

**Worshiping Every Sunday in the East Bay at 9 a.m. in
Grace Lutheran Church
1836 B St., Hayward, CA 94541-3140**

**Worshiping in the Central Valley at 2 p.m. - 1st & 3rd Sundays of the
Month**

**Atria Senior Living - Bayside Landing - 1st Floor Activity Room
3318 Brookside Rd., Stockton, CA 95219**

Pastor: Steven Karp
21290 Birch St. - Hayward, CA 94541-1538
Phone: (510) 581-6637; e-mail: se-karp@sbcglobal.net

Organist: Elizabeth Karp

**Christmas Eve—24 December 2015
Christmas Day—25 December 2015**



*Glory to God in the Highest, And on earth peace,
goodwill toward men!*

Hymn – O Come, All Ye Faithful

1. O come, all ye faithful,
Joyful and triumphant,
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem;
Come and behold Him,
Born the King of angels:
O Come let us adore Him,
O Come let us adore Him,
O Come let us adore Him,
Christ the Lord.

Invocation In the name of the Father, and of the ☩ Son, and
of the Holy Ghost.

Amen.

Prayer Lord God, heavenly Father, we give thanks to You that
of Your mercy and compassion You caused Your Son to become
incarnate, and through Him redeemed us from sin and everlasting
death: We beseech You, enlighten our hearts by Your Holy Spirit,
that we may be ever thankful for such grace, and comfort
ourselves thereby in all tribulation and temptation, and at last
obtain eternal salvation; through the same, Your beloved Son,
Jesus Christ, our Lord, Who lives and reigns with You and the
Holy Spirit, ever the One true God, now and forever.

Amen.

An Old Testament Lesson

Isaiah 9,2+6-7

The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they
that dwell in the land of the Shadow of Death, upon them has the
light shined. ⁶ For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given:

and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. ⁷ Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon His Kingdom to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the LORD of Hosts will perform it.



Hymn – O Come, All Ye Faithful

2. Highest, most holy,
 Light of light eternal,
 Born of a Virgin a mortal He comes;
 Son of the Father
 Now in flesh appearing!
 O Come let us adore Him,
 O Come let us adore Him,
 O Come let us adore Him,
 Christ the Lord.

3. Sing, choirs of angels,
 Sing in exultation,
 Sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!
 Glory to God
 In the highest:
 O Come let us adore Him,
 O Come let us adore Him,
 O Come let us adore Him,
 Christ the Lord.

An Old Testament Lesson

Micah 5,2-4

But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,



Too little to be among the clans of
Judah,

From you One will go forth from Me to
be Ruler in Israel,

His goings forth are from long ago,
From the days of eternity.

³ Therefore, He will give them up until
the time

When She who is in labor has borne a

Child.

Then the remainder of His brethren

Will return to the sons of Israel.

⁴ And He will arise and shepherd His flock

In the strength of the LORD,

In the majesty of the name of the LORD His God,

And they will remain,

Because at that time He will be great

To the ends of the earth.

And this One will be our peace.

Hymn - O Little Town of Bethlehem

1. O little town of Bethlehem,

How still we see thee lie;

Above thy deep and dreamless sleep

The silent stars go by;

Yet in thy dark street shineth

The everlasting light;

The hopes and fears of all the years

Are met in thee tonight.

2. For Christ is born of Mary,
 And, gathered all above,
 While mortals sleep, the angels keep
 Their watch of wond'ring love.
 O morning stars, together
 Proclaim the holy birth!
 And praises sing to God the King,
 And peace to all on earth.

3. O holy Child of Bethlehem,
 Descend to us, we pray,
 Cast out our sin and enter in,
 Be born in us today.
 We hear the Christmas angels
 The great glad tidings tell;
 O come to us, abide in us,
 Our Lord Immanuel.

A New Testament Lesson Titus 2,11-14
 For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men,
¹² instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to
 live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, ¹³ looking
 for the blessed hope and the appearing of our great God and
 Savior, Christ Jesus; ¹⁴ Who gave Himself for us, that He might
 redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself a
 people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.

Hymn – From Heaven Above

1. From heav'n above to earth I come
 To bear good news to every 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 and Lord,
Who in all need shall aid afford;
He will Himself your Savior be
From all your sins to set you free.

4. Ah, dearest Jesus, holy Child,
Make Thee a bed, soft undefiled,
Within my heart, that it may be
A quiet chamber kept for Thee.

GRADUAL

For unto us a Child is born,

For unto us a Son is given.

And His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor,

**The Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of
Peace.**

O Sing unto the LORD a new song,

For He has done marvelous things.

The LORD has made known His salvation;

**His righteousness has He openly shown in the sight of
the heathen.**

He has remembered His mercy and His truth toward the House of
Israel;

**All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our
God.**

**ALL: (sung) Glory be to the Father and to the Son and
to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and
ever shall be world without end. Amen.**

Hymn – Joy to the World

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. 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.

The Christmas Gospel

Luke 2,1-20

And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed.
² (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.)
³ And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city.
⁴ And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:)
⁵ To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with Child.
⁶ And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that

she should be delivered. ⁷ And She brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

⁸ And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹ And, lo, the Angel of the LORD came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. ¹⁰ And the Angel said unto them, “Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. ¹¹ For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. ¹² And this shall be a sign unto you; you shall find the Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, 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, and on earth peace, good will toward men.”

¹⁵ And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, “Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord has made known unto us.” ¹⁶ And they came with haste, and

found Mary, and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger. ¹⁷ And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this Child. ¹⁸ And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds. ¹⁹ But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart. ²⁰ And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.

The Apostles' Creed

**I believe in God the Father Almighty,
 Maker of heaven and earth.
 And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord,
 Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost,
 Born of the Virgin Mary,
 Suffered under Pontius Pilate,
 Was crucified, dead and buried;
 He descended into hell;
 The third day He rose again from the dead;
 He ascended into heaven,
 And sitteth on the right hand of God the Father
 Almighty;
 From thence He shall come to judge the quick and the
 dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Ghost;
 The Holy Christian Church,
 The Communion of saints;
 The forgiveness of sins;
 The resurrection of the body;
 And the life everlasting. ✠ Amen.**

Hymn – Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

1. Hark! The herald, angels sing,
“Glory to the newborn King;
Peace on earth and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled!”
Joyful, all ye nations rise,
Join the triumph of the skies;
With the angelic host proclaim,
“Christ is born in Bethlehem!”
Hark! The herald angels sing,
“Glory to the newborn King!”

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 the incarnate deity!
Pleased as Man with man to dwell,
Jesus, our Immanuel!
Hark! The herald angels sing,
“Glory to the newborn King!”

3. Hail, the heav’n-born 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 man no more may die,
Born to raise the sons of earth,
Born to give them second birth,
Hark! The herald angels sing,

“Glory to the newborn King!”

Christmas Meditation

Hymn – Away In A Manger

1. Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,
The little Lord Jesus laid down His sweet head.
The stars in the sky looked down where He lay,
The little Lord Jesus, asleep on the hay.

2. The cattle are lowing, the Baby awakes,
But little Lord Jesus, no crying He makes;
I love Thee, Lord Jesus, look down from the sky
And stay by my cradle till morning is nigh.

3 Be near me, Lord Jesus, I ask Thee to stay
Close by me forever, and love me, I pray;
Bless all the dear children in Thy tender care,
And fit us for Heaven to live with Thee there.

Offering – Hayward

Prayer of the Church & Lord’s Prayer

**Our Father Who art in heaven,
Hallowed be Thy name;
Thy Kingdom come;
Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven;
Give us this day our daily bread;
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
And lead us not into temptation;**

**But deliver us from evil;
For Thine is the Kingdom and the Power and the Glory
forever and ever. AMEN.**

Hymn – Silent Night

1. 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.

2. Silent night, holy night,
Shepherds quake at the sight;
Glories stream from heaven afar,
Heavenly hosts sing, Alleluia,
Christ, the Savior is born!
Christ, the Savior is born!

3. 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.

Benediction

The Lord bless you and keep you.
The Lord make His Face shine upon you and be gracious unto
you.
The Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace.

In the name of the Father and of the ☩ Son and of the Holy Ghost.

Amen. Amen. Amen. [sing]

Hymn – Angels We Have Heard On High

1. Angels we have heard on high,
Sweetly singing o'er the plains,
And the mountains in reply,
Echoing their joyous strains.
Gloria in excelsis Deo;
Gloria in excelsis Deo.

2. Shepherds, why this jubilee?
Why your joyous strains prolong?
What the gladsome tidings be
Which inspire your heavenly song?
Gloria in excelsis Deo;
Gloria in excelsis Deo.

3. Come to Bethlehem and see
Him whose birth the angels sing;
Come, adore on bended knee
Christ the Lord, the newborn King.
Gloria in excelsis Deo;
Gloria in excelsis Deo.

+ + +

Lessons for 27 December – The First Sunday After Christmas

Old Testament: Isaiah 11.1–5

Epistle: Galatians 4,1–7

Gospel: Luke 2,33–40

Weekly Scripture Verse: And the Word became flesh, and dwelt

among us, and we beheld His glory. (John 1,14)

Next Service in Stockton: Sunday, 3 January, at 2 p.m.

Today's Gradual is based on selected verses from Isaiah 9 and Psalm 98.

Reports Due. Reports from committee chairman should be given to Timothy Blank by the new year. The installation of new officers for 2016 will take place at the 9 a.m. service in Hayward on 10 January and a council meeting will be held after the service. Committee chairman should have their boards constituted by this time.

The Date and Meaning of Christmas. Was Jesus born on or around December 25? Very possibly. An early Christian writer, Sextus Julius Africanus (circa. 220 AD) noted that Jewish thought placed the



Paula Jordan

© Verlag Johannis

beginning of the world on March 25 and thought it symbolic that Jesus' incarnation would have been on that date; add nine months for the birth. Hippolytus of Rome, writing about 225 AD, placed Jesus' birth on December 25. St. John Chrysostom (347-407 AD) dated Zechariah's service in the temple around

October; Elizabeth, Zechariah's wife, became pregnant with John the Baptist and six months later (in March) the Virgin Mary visited Elizabeth and Mary was pregnant (Chrysostom used temple records to see which class of priest was serving when and knew to which class Zechariah belonged by looking at Luke 1,5).

The introduction of Christmas to the Christian calendar as a festival seems to have been begun in the West in the third century. In the East, it was celebrated on 6 January (the Epiphany); while its origins may go back to the second century, it was formally adopted as a festival in the third century.

There are those who say that shepherds would not have been in the fields around Bethlehem in December. Paul Maier, however, shows that this assumption is just incorrect. Citing both ancient and modern sources, Maier shows that shepherds would have kept their flocks in the field until the coming of the rainy season in January.

What about Christmas being introduced as competition to the pagan festival of Sol Invictus (“the Unconquered Sun”)? It would appear that in Republican Rome (before the birth of Christ), the Roman festival calendar did not have a specific date set for a celebration to Sol. When the celebration did occur, the major celebrations were in August and October (however, one must note that complete festival calendars are sketchy and at times incomplete). A. D. Nock notes: “Nevertheless, this period is marked by one innovation of the greatest importance — Rome had a Republican cult of Sol, but it had faded, and the importance of Sol in the city is due to Aurelian, who on his return from Syria built the great temple of Sol Invictus, introduced the celebration of his birthday (natalis Invicti) on December 25, and established the college of pontifices Solis.”

The emperor Aurelian ruled from 270–275 AD. The cult of Sol Invictus was especially popular in the Roman army (Aurelian was a general before becoming emperor). Also, those who believe that the cult of Sol was a move toward monotheism in pagan Rome misunderstand the nature of paganism, which accepted a multitude of gods and goddesses. The emphasis in paganism was not orthodoxy (that is, correct belief) but orthopraxy (that is, correct ritual — similar to some mainline Christian churches who have departed from confessing the true faith but still hold to correct liturgical ritual).

While there are many church and secular historians who think that the establishment of the festival of Christ’s birth in December was to counter the cult of Sol, others look at the writings of the early Church Fathers and conclude that it was more due to the symbolism of the True Light, Jesus Christ, coming into the world on or around the shortest day of the year (the winter solstice). In fact, Steven Hijimnas’ work concludes that the pagan feast celebrating Sol Invictus actually was established after Christians began to celebrate Christmas in the West. We can date the celebration of

Christmas on 25 December in Rome by 326, “at which point it may already have been well established.” the festival for Sol was not on the pagan Roman calendars by the late 320s and the earliest we can date this pagan festival is 354. Also, Hijimans cites Bowerstock, who says more attention should be paid to the extent that pagans in antiquity copied, incorporated, or responded to Christian practices, elements, and dates.

While none of this is conclusive, it also shows the December date should not be dismissed out of hand; it also shows that Christmas is not some sort of “pagan” holiday which should not be celebrated. (Sources: A. D. Nocks, *The Development of Paganism in the Roman Empire*, in *The Cambridge Ancient History*, vol. 11; Gregory Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy*; Michael Grant, *The World of Rome*; Michael Grant, *Rome*; Ramsay MacMullen, *Paganism in the Roman Empire*; Steven Hijimans, “Sol Invictus, the Winter Solstice, and the Origins of Christianity,” in *Mouseion* (3:2003, pp. 377–398); and, “Usener’s Christmas: A Contribution to the Modern Construct of Late Antique Solar Syncretism” in *Die Morphologie der Philologie: Hermann Usener und seine Folgen* [Wiesbaden, 2011: pp. 139–152]; Paul A. Maier, *In the Fullness of Time: A Historian Looks at Christmas, Easter, and the Early Church*).

