



Year A (Dec 2025, Jan 2026) – Christmas

## ***CHRIST THE SAVIOR IS BORN***

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### **SERIES EXPLANATION**

“Silent Night” was written originally in German by Joseph Mohr, with music composed by Franz Gruber. The carol was first performed on Christmas Eve in 1818 at St. Nicholas Church in Oberndorf, Austria. Legend says the church organ was broken, prompting Gruber to compose a simple guitar accompaniment. Subsequently accompanied by many instruments and translated into many languages, the text paints the picture of the incarnation. The last phrase is repeated, so in the second stanza we hear it twice: “Christ the Savior is born!” Every word of that phrase is significant, and every line of the Christmas carol describes a Bible truth. We use the beloved hymn to ponder the profound message of the Twelve Days of Christmas.

In the season of Christmas, our worship follows this pattern.

|                               |                                                   |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| Christmas Eve                 | <i>Heavenly Hosts Sing Alleluia</i>               |
| Christmas Day                 | <i>Holy Infant So Tender and Mild</i>             |
| First Sunday after Christmas  | <i>Son of God</i>                                 |
| Second Sunday after Christmas | <i>The Dawn of Redeeming Grace</i>                |
| Epiphany of Our Lord          | <i>Love’s Pure Light Beams from Thy Holy Face</i> |



**CHRIST THE SAVIOR IS BORN**

**HEAVENLY HOSTS SING ALLELUIA**

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**EXPLANATION OF THE THEME OF THE DAY**

Families cherish their Christmas traditions. Year after year, they decorate the tree with the same ornaments, play the same music, bake the same Christmas cookies. Without asking, family members know when they will open presents. If you try to change your family's Christmas traditions, you might be in trouble! When it comes to family Christmases, people generally don't like things to change.

Because our celebration of Christmas has so many unchanging traditions, we might miss the fact that the birth of Christ the Savior meant radical change for the world. Would the change be an improvement or another step in decline? The angels answer the question. They don't sing "Watch out for impending doom!" They sing "glory" and "peace," praising God with alleluias!

**READING INTRODUCTIONS** *(to be printed in the worship folder and/or read prior to the lesson)*

Micah 5:2-5a – The prophet foretold that a person would come from a little town called Bethlehem to bring peace to the world.

\*Titus 2:11-14 – The grace God showed us in sending his Son changes not only our present lives but also our eternal destiny.

Luke 2:1-20 – This child's birth changed the relationship of human beings and God.

**Preacher Notes**

The Second Reading is chosen as the sermon text. We join the heavenly host in singing "Alleluia" because the birth of Christ the Savior is good news for us and all people. We change our behavior to make our lives into alleluias, daily songs of praise to God. We look forward to singing "Alleluia" to Jesus Christ in heaven.

**[Psalm 96](#)**

Click on the link to help choose which psalter setting will work best in your congregation.

**PSALM INTRODUCTION** *(to be printed in the worship folder and/or read prior to singing the Psalm)* – The Church sings Psalm 96 in services that celebrate Jesus entering the world with his righteousness for the sake of people from every nation.

**Hymns**

|             | <u>Familiar</u> | <u>Introductory</u> | <u>Advanced</u> |
|-------------|-----------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| Opening     | 335             | 336                 | 338             |
| HOD         | 329             | 329                 | 329             |
| Third/Distr | 346             | 346                 | 346             |
| Closing     | 337             | 337                 | 337             |

[329](#) (All My Heart Again Rejoices) was usually sung on Christmas Eve because the English translation in TLH had “this night” in the title.

[335](#) (To Shepherds as They Watched by Night) is a Martin Luther text to a very familiar tune.

[336](#) (While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks by Night) is a TLH text (not in CW93) set to a familiar tune easier to play and sing than the TLH tune.

[337](#) (Silent Night) is the theme hymn of the series.

[338](#) (On Christmas Night All Christians Sing) has notes to indicate when to sing in unison and in harmony.

[346](#) (Angels We Have Heard on High) is quite well known.



Nativity of our Lord – Christmas Day

December 25, 2025

**CHRIST THE SAVIOR IS BORN**

**HOLY INFANT SO TENDER AND MILD**

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### EXPLANATION OF THE THEME OF THE DAY

From eternity, Jesus has been God, holy and majestic. When we look tenderly at the holy infant, we are looking at the same God who once told the prophet Moses, “No one may see me and live.” Yet, Mary, Joseph, and the shepherds all saw their holy God and survived. How? God became human, hiding his glory within flesh, so that he could come to us without instilling fear or dread.

A famous theologian once said, “We are to think of the Lord’s birth, where the Word became flesh, not as a past event which we recall, but as a present reality on which we gaze.” It’s not that Christ the Savior *was* born. It’s that Christ the Savior *is* born.

### READING INTRODUCTIONS *(to be printed in the worship folder and/or read prior to the lesson)*

Isaiah 52:7-10 – The prophet foretold that the Lord would dwell among us and do what was necessary to bring the good news of salvation to the ends of the earth.

Hebrews 1:1-9 – In the past God sent angels and prophets as messengers to his people. Now God speaks to us directly through his Son.

\*John 1:1-14 – The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.

### Preacher Notes

The Gospel is chosen as the sermon text. It describes the incarnation. In the Old Testament, the glory of the Lord filled the temple with smoke and hearts with dread. Holiness was threatening. But with Christ the Savior, God’s glory could be seen because it was hidden beneath flesh and blood. The Spirit brings people to believe that the one who made them is approachable in Word and sacrament.

While Christmas Eve has become our culture’s chief celebration of Christmas, the Church’s primary celebration of Jesus’ birth remains on Christmas Day. A setting of The Service with the celebration of Holy Communion is appropriate. *Service Builder* offers several responsive dialogues in the menu options for Additional Rites. These dialogues replace the Confession and the “Kyrie.” Two dialogues are provided for Christmas. *Service Builder* also offers Proclamation of the Birth of Christ under Additional Rites. The Proclamation may be read by the presiding minister or another speaker before the first hymn. The regular canticles of The Service may be replaced by Christmas hymns with similar themes. For example, “Angels We Have Heard on High” (346, sts. 1,3) may replace the “Gloria”; “Now Sing We, Now Rejoice” (363, sts. 1,4) may replace the “Sanctus”; and “O Little Town of Bethlehem” (333, sts. 3,4) may replace the “Agnus Dei.” In addition, the Christological section of the Athanasian Creed (sentences 27-38,40) would make a fitting confession of faith.

## [Psalm 98](#)

Click on the link to help choose which psalter setting will work best in your congregation.

**PSALM INTRODUCTION** *(to be printed in the worship folder and/or read prior to singing the Psalm)* – The Church sings Psalm 98 in services that praise God for bringing righteousness and salvation to people across the world.

### Hymns

|             | <u>Familiar</u> | <u>Introductory</u> | <u>Advanced</u> |
|-------------|-----------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| Opening     | 354             | 345                 | 345             |
| HOD         | 358             | 358                 | 358             |
| Third/Distr | 331             | 366                 | 331             |
| Closing     | 337             | 337                 | 337             |

[331](#) (From Heaven Above to Earth I Come) is a Lutheran classic.

[337](#) (Silent Night) is the theme hymn of the series.

[345](#) (Where Shepherds Lately Knelt) became popular when it was introduced in the 1993 hymnal.

[354](#) (O Come, All Ye Faithful) is quite well known.

[358](#) (Of the Father's Love Begotten) is a little harder to sing than one might expect.

[366](#) (O Rejoice, All Christians, Loudly) is written to be sung in parts (as it was in TLH).

If there is a desire not to sing the theme hymn (337, Silent Night) again, any of the following hymns might be substituted.

#### Familiar

340 Away in a Manger

341 Away in a Manger

347 Angels from the Realms of Glory

353 Joy to the World

361 Go, Tell It on the Mountain

#### Introductory

339 Infant Holy, Infant Lowly

#### Advanced

348 A Child Is Born in Bethlehem

351 He Whose Praise the Shepherds Sounded

356 God Rest You Merry, Gentlemen

357 A Glory Fills the Midnight Sky

365 Lord, You Were Rich beyond All Splendor



First Sunday after Christmas

December 28, 2025

**CHRIST THE SAVIOR IS BORN**  
**SON OF GOD**

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**EXPLANATION OF THE THEME OF THE DAY**

Christmas holidays mean family time, often with extended family travel and visits. Meals are prepared, gifts are given, memories are made. But the memories might not all be good. Sometimes there are Christmas hurts or even tragedies. We live in a world still affected by sin.

The sinfulness of the world cannot rob us of the peace God intends to bring through his Son. Christ the Savior is born, and through his life, God brings us into the family. He gives us the rights of redeemed sons and daughters, the privileges of inheritance.

**READING INTRODUCTIONS** *(to be printed in the worship folder and/or read prior to the lesson)*

Isaiah 63:7-9 – The kindness of the Lord is seen in sending a Savior to redeem those who turn away from him.

Galatians 4:4-7 – Redeemed by God’s true Son, we can call God our “Father.”

\*Matthew 2:13-23 – God saves his Son from an early death. God’s plan was to save the world by having his Son die on the cross when the time had fully come.

**Preacher Notes**

The Gospel is chosen as the sermon text. The Commentary on the Propers for Year A notes that the account includes the slaughter of the Holy Innocents of Bethlehem. In the fourth and fifth century, the Western church established December 28 as the date to commemorate their martyrdom. Luther said that this reading should not be permitted to disappear from the church’s public worship for any reason. The little boys of Bethlehem praised God by dying in the place of Christ. A Prudentius hymn says, “Of you, O little lambs we sing, first victims slain for Christ our King; beneath the heavenly altar’s ray with martyr palms and crowns you play!” (CW 978). The alternate first two readings specifically for Holy Innocents (Jr 31:15-17, 1 Pe 4:12-19) could be substituted.

**Psalm 2**

Click on the link to help choose which psalter setting will work best in your congregation.

**PSALM INTRODUCTION** *(to be printed in the worship folder and/or read prior to singing the Psalm)* – The Church sings Psalm 2 in services that emphasize the relationship of the Father and the Son.

**Hymns**

|             | <u>Familiar</u> | <u>Introductory</u> | <u>Advanced</u> |
|-------------|-----------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| Opening     | 332             | 332                 | 978             |
| HOD         | 355             | 355                 | 355             |
| Third/Distr | 342             | 342                 | 342             |
| Closing     | 337             | 337                 | 337             |

[332](#) (Let Us All with Gladsome Voice) is easy to play and to sing (even in parts).

[337](#) (Silent Night) is the theme hymn of the series.

[342](#) (O Jesus Christ, Your Manger Is) is familiar as the closing hymn of every MLC Christmas concert.

[355](#) (Let All Together Praise Our God) is a familiar tune used twice in both TLH and CW93.

[978](#) (All Hail! You Infant Martyr Flowers) is an excellent newly translated text to the tune of CW21 314 (O Savior, Rend the Heavens Wide).

If there is a desire not to sing the theme hymn (337, Silent Night) again, any of the following hymns might be substituted.

#### Familiar

340 Away in a Manger

341 Away in a Manger

347 Angels from the Realms of Glory

353 Joy to the World

361 Go, Tell It on the Mountain

#### Introductory

339 Infant Holy, Infant Lowly

#### Advanced

348 A Child Is Born in Bethlehem

351 He Whose Praise the Shepherds Sounded

356 God Rest You Merry, Gentlemen

357 A Glory Fills the Midnight Sky

365 Lord, You Were Rich beyond All Splendor



Second Sunday after Christmas

January 4, 2026

**CHRIST THE SAVIOR IS BORN**

## **THE DAWN OF REDEEMING GRACE**

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### **EXPLANATION OF THE THEME OF THE DAY**

We continue the Christmas celebration of the dawning of the light of all mankind. When the sun rises, we can see things that we haven't seen before. When Christ the Savior is born, the light of new revelation breaks over the world. When the Son rises, we can clearly see the grace of God, our Redeemer.

### **READING INTRODUCTIONS** *(to be printed in the worship folder and/or read prior to the lesson)*

\*Isaiah 61:10-62:3 – God promises that his righteousness and glory will be made known to all nations.

Ephesians 1:3-18 – Paul prays that we might know God better.

John 1:14-18 – Through Jesus we discover the grace and truth of God the Father.

### **Preacher Notes**

The First Reading is chosen as the sermon text. The righteousness that is by faith can only be understood when the grace of God is revealed in the person of Jesus. After making that clear, God tells the surprising way he will reveal his glory and righteousness: they will be seen in his people. As a king's crown shows his power, so the righteousness of his people makes known the glory of the unseen God.

### **Psalm 148**

Click on the link to help choose which psalter setting will work best in your congregation.

**PSALM INTRODUCTION** *(to be printed in the worship folder and/or read prior to singing the Psalm)* – The Church sings Psalm 148 in services that praise God for keeping his promises.

### **Hymns**

|             | <u>Familiar</u> | <u>Introductory</u> | <u>Advanced</u> |
|-------------|-----------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| Opening     | 362             | 343                 | 334             |
| HOD         | 383             | 383                 | 383             |
| Third/Distr | 359             | 364                 | 363             |
| Closing     | 337             | 337                 | 337             |

[334](#) (I Stand Beside Your Manger Here) is a famous Lutheran text newly translated and set to a very familiar tune.

[337](#) (Silent Night) is the theme hymn of the series.

[343](#) (Once in Royal David's City) can be sung anytime in Advent or during the Twelve Days of Christmas.

[359](#) (We Praise You, Jesus, at Your Birth) has a great Lutheran heritage but is more difficult to sing than it first appears.



[362](#) (Come, Your Hearts and Voices Raising) is sung by Lutherans everywhere.

[363](#) (Now Sing We, Now Rejoice) still retains some of its folk tune character.

[364](#) (Love Has Come) is a new text to a familiar French folk tune.

[383](#) (The Only Son from Heaven) is an old Lutheran hymn that has gained some modern popularity.



Epiphany of Our Lord

January 6, 2026

**CHRIST THE SAVIOR IS BORN**

**LOVE'S PURE LIGHT BEAMS FROM THY  
HOLY FACE**

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### EXPLANATION OF THE THEME OF THE DAY

The Twelve Days of Christmas are the days between Christmas Day and January 6. What is special about January 6? It is the day when the Christian Church celebrates the Festival of the Epiphany. Epiphany comes from a Greek word meaning “reveal.” When the Savior was born, he was first revealed as love’s pure light to Israelites: Mary, Joseph, the shepherds. Today we see the Lord miraculously guiding foreigners across countless miles so the Savior’s holy face could be revealed to them as well. The Festival of Epiphany is sometimes known as Christmas for the Gentiles. We Gentiles (non-Jews) rejoice in the good news that this Jewish baby is a gift for all people, Christ the Savior of the world.

### READING INTRODUCTIONS *(to be printed in the worship folder and/or read prior to the lesson)*

Isaiah 60:1-6 – The prophet foretold that one born king of the Jews would draw kings from distant nations to the light of his glory.

Ephesians 3:2-12 – Paul explains that that people from all nations are united as equals in the Savior’s kingdom of grace.

\*Matthew 2:1-12 – Magi from the east were the first in a long line of Gentiles would join Israel in worshipping Jesus as King.

### Preacher Notes

A few will celebrate Epiphany in a special service on Tuesday, January 6. More will celebrate it on the Sunday before (January 4), replacing the Christmas 2 readings (which are used in four out of seven years). Some will omit its celebration in worship. It is not recommended to celebrate it on the First Sunday after Epiphany (January 11), replacing the Baptism of Jesus readings.

The Gospel reading is chosen as the sermon text. A star, a special light, led the Magi to the one who had been born King of the Jews. The face of the small child did not beam unnaturally, but the love of God was radiant in the hearts of all those who believed this promises. The holiness of Christ the Savior was already evident even to Gentiles.

### [Psalm 72](#)

Click on the link to help choose which psalter setting will work best in your congregation.

**PSALM INTRODUCTION** *(to be printed in the worship folder and/or read prior to singing the Psalm)* –

Recognizing the reference to kings bowing down and presenting gifts to the great King, the Church sings Psalm 72 in services that celebrate the Epiphany.

## Hymns

|             | <u>Familiar</u> | <u>Introductory</u> | <u>Advanced</u> |
|-------------|-----------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| Opening     | 344             | 371                 | 364             |
| HOD         | 370             | 370                 | 370             |
| Third/Distr | 362             | 372                 | 352             |
| Closing     | 337             | 337                 | 337             |

[337](#) (Silent Night) is the theme hymn of the series.

[344](#) (What Child Is This) is well known.

[352](#) (Joy Has Dawned) is the most popular of the new Christmas hymns in CW21.

[362](#) (Come, Your Hearts and Voices Raising) is sung by Lutherans everywhere.

[364](#) (Love Has Come) is a new text to a familiar French folk tune.

[370](#) (How Lovely Shines the Morning Star) should be learned by congregations who don't know it.

[371](#) (A Child Is Born in Bethlehem) is a newly translated text set to a classical tune.

[372](#) (As with Gladness Men of Old) is usually sung on the Festival of the Epiphany.