



**Christ
Lutheran**
CHURCH

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Season of Advent
December 3, 2023

We Welcome You to Christ Lutheran Church! We are a community of people sharing God's love through Christ and growing together in faith.

We celebrate all the ways we are made in the image of God, seeking to see God in everyone. We honor and respect each person's age, ethnicity, family composition, gender identity, gender expression, life history, mental well-being, physical ability, relationship status, sexual orientation, skin color, and socioeconomic standing. Together, we strive to love and serve our neighbor and all creation, including working toward racial and social justice. We would love to walk with you on this creative adventure* of faith, grace, and love.

** The first sermon ever preached at Christ Lutheran was titled "A Call to Creative Adventure."*

YOU ARE WELCOME HERE!

At Christ Lutheran people of all backgrounds and experiences gather to worship because we all share a common hope: the life, death, and resurrection of Christ makes all things new, even us.

You will find everything that happens in worship printed in this bulletin, with hymns found in the red hymnals ("ELW") in the seats in front on you.

If you have a prayer request, the yellow cards in the seatback holders have a place for them; the other side is for any information you would like about Christ Lutheran. Please feel welcome to remain seated as necessary during the service.

CHILDREN ARE ALWAYS WELCOME IN CHURCH!

God's people come in all shapes and sizes – it is a gift to the whole community when the smallest of us are present! Sitting with parents and learning to treasure times of worship is the foundation for helping build a growing faith in a child's life. There's some noise and movement that we expect from little ones - feel free to make use of the **activity bags, doodle pads, bookshelf in the overflow area and cry room at the back of the sanctuary** as needed. Whatever sacrifice of energy and effort you make to include your children in worship is multiplied as the good news of God's love takes root in their lives!

WHEN NURSERY CARE IS NEEDED DURING WORSHIP

A fully equipped and staffed Nursery is available for both infants and toddlers during all services. The Nursery is located west of our gathering area in **Room 110**.

RESTROOMS

Men's and women's restrooms off the Gathering Area and Church Hall have changing tables, as does the all-gender restroom near the nursery. A second all-gender restroom is through the Vestry off the East hallway, past the Welcome Center.

HOLY COMMUNION

Holy Communion is the family meal of God's people, to which we come at Jesus' invitation. The body and blood of Christ, in the bread and wine, are his real presence with us and offer the gift of forgiveness because of his death and resurrection. Drawn together and strengthened by this meal, we are given a taste of the fullness of God's coming kingdom, and are equipped to be the hands and feet of God's love in the world. All baptized Christians are always welcome at the Lord's table.

Our services are on video, and occasional photographs are taken for our website and e-mail news.

If you have concerns, please speak to a church staff member.

Hearing assistance devices are available to those who need help with listening to the service and are located at the entrance to the sanctuary, or please see an Usher for assistance.

A Reminder: Please turn off all cell phones during worship services.

Stir up your power, and come! The psalmist's plea in Psalm 80:2 has become familiar to us in the Advent prayers. Isaiah wants God to rip the heavens open. Both cry out for an apparently distant, angry God to show up, to save, to restore. When we hear Jesus describing the coming of the Son of Man with stars falling from heaven, it can sound dire and horrible, not like anything we would ever hope for. But when we really look at the suffering of people God loves, we can share the hope that God would tear open the heavens and come.

GATHERING

The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God

PRELUDE

Fantasy on 'What Child is This?'

Purvis

WELCOME

If you are joining us for the first time, welcome! We'd love to meet you, or if there's anything you'd like to know about the ministry of Christ Lutheran Church, please consider [filling out a Connection Card online](#) (you can point your phone at the graphic to the right) or using a yellow Connection Card in the pew holders.



Prayer requests can be posted to the livechat or use a yellow Prayer Request (on the backside of the Connection Card) and give them to an usher.

*If you are worshipping with us via livestream, consider **preparing your space for Communion**: light a candle (if appropriate and safe), and have a plate with bread/cracker/tortilla and a cup for wine or grape juice (or an empty cup as a sign Jesus is sufficient in one or both elements).*

CALL TO WORSHIP

We gather today.

It is time to worship!

We listen for God.

It is time to hear!

We receive God's grace.

It is time to be loved!

We leave in peace.

It is time to serve others!

As we wait for Jesus' arrival,

Emmanuel, God-with-us,

is already here in this time and place.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

People of God, when we think that we have nowhere left to turn,
we can always turn to God.

Whether we feel frozen or are rushing with no time to rest,
whether it feels like life is happening to us too quickly
or like our lives will never change,
God is with us.

For God, there is always time for forgiveness.
We trust God, and we confess our sins together.

Time for reflection.

Holy One,

We have not stayed awake.

**We have missed you when you appeared
in our neighbors,**

**in strangers half a world away,
in the suffering planet.**

**We have wasted the time and the skills that you gave us
and assumed we were powerless to mend
the breaches in our world.**

**Sometimes, we even gave up
on your mercy, justice, and love.**

God, is it too late for us?

Speak tenderly to our anxious hearts.

Tear open the heavens and heal what we have done. Amen.

People of God,

God's judgment is certain
and God's forgiveness is lightning fast.

Hear this good news:

in the name of † Jesus Christ, all your sins are forgiven.

Forgiveness gives us the courage we need.

Wherever we wait for God's time to come,
we will witness wonders.

Amen.

GATHERING HYMN ELW #246 *Hark! A Thrilling Voice Is Sounding*



1 Hark! a thrill - ing voice is sound - ing! "Christ is near," we
2 Wak - ened by the sol - emn warn - ing, from earth's bond - age
3 See the Lamb, so long ex - pect - ed, come with par - don
4 So, when next he comes in glo - ry and the world is
5 Hon - or, glo - ry, might, and bless - ing to the Fa - ther



hear it say. "Cast a - way the works of dark - ness,
let us rise; Christ, our sun, all sloth dis - pel - ling,
down from heav'n. Let us haste, with tears of sor - row,
wrapped in fear, he will shield us with his mer - cy
and the Son with the ev - er - last - ing Spir - it



all you chil - dren of the day!"
shines up - on the morn - ing skies.
one and all, to be for - giv'n;
and with words of love draw near.
while un - end - ing a - ges run!

Text: Latin hymn, 1632; tr. Edward Caswall, 1814–1878
Music: MERTON, William H. Monk, 1823–1889

GREETING

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

And also with you.

Children: This is the day that the Lord has made.

Let us rejoice and be glad in it!

The assembly is seated.

LIGHTING THE ADVENT WREATH

“O that you would tear open the heavens and come down. . . .” (Isaiah 64:1a)

Let us pray.

We wait for you, O God.

We wait for you to come and save us.

We wait for you to end what hurts us.

As we light another candle on this wreath,
arrive in our hearts, our homes, our world—
even as we still wait.

You promise that all evil will cease one day.

Give us a glimpse of that today.

Amen.

SONG *Out of Time*



1. Out of time, out of space, now we hope for bet - ter days, keep - ing
2. Time flows fast; make it slow, give more time for all we love. Time grows
3. When the earth yearns for peace and the peo - ple cry for bread with a



watch when the wait - ing wears us down. Drawn out thin, pulled in tight, search - ing
long; turn our wait - ing to its end. In our years, in our days, God, your
hun - ger that you a - lone can fill, we will pray, we will work, we will



for the break of day, will we ev - er find you draw - ing near?
good - ness is at work. Can it be you might be draw - ing near?
all pre - pare the way, and in time we find you draw - ing near.

Refrain



You come to us from just be - yond, you call to us from out of time,



you tear the heav - ens op - en wide, shin - ing love a - cross the star - lit sky.

WORD

God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching and song.

When children read, they may read a version that is appropriate to their reading level and voice, which may vary from the printed texts.

CHILDREN'S TIME

Children are invited forward for a time together.

READING: Isaiah 64:1-9

This lament comes from a people who have had their hopes shattered. The visions of a rebuilt Jerusalem and a renewed people of God, spoken of in Isaiah 40–55, have not been realized. Instead, the people experience ruin, conflict, and famine. This lament calls God to account—to be the God who has brought deliverance in the past.

- ¹O that you would tear open the heavens and come down,
so that the mountains would quake at your presence—
²as when fire kindles brushwood
and the fire causes water to boil—
to make your name known to your adversaries,
so that the nations might tremble at your presence!
³When you did awesome deeds that we did not expect,
you came down, the mountains quaked at your presence.
⁴From ages past no one has heard,
no ear has perceived,
no eye has seen any God besides you,
who works for those who wait for him.
⁵You meet those who gladly do right,
those who remember you in your ways.
But you were angry, and we sinned;
because you hid yourself we transgressed.
⁶We have all become like one who is unclean,
and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy cloth.
We all fade like a leaf,
and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.
⁷There is no one who calls on your name,
or attempts to take hold of you;
for you have hidden your face from us,
and have delivered us into the hand of our iniquity.
⁸Yet, O LORD, you are our Father;
we are the clay, and you are our potter;
we are all the work of your hand.
⁹Do not be exceedingly angry, O LORD,
and do not remember iniquity forever.
Now consider, we are all your people.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

The assembly stands to welcome the Gospel.



Al-le-lu - ia, al - le-lu - ia, al-le-lu - ia.



Repeat alleluia

Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of e - ter - nal life.

HOLY GOSPEL: Mark 13:24-37

Jesus encourages his followers to look forward to the day when he returns in power and glory to end all suffering.

The Holy Gospel according to Mark.

Glory to you, O Lord.

[Jesus said:] ²⁴“In those days, after that suffering,
the sun will be darkened,
and the moon will not give its light,
²⁵and the stars will be falling from heaven,
and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.

²⁶Then they will see ‘the Son of Man coming in clouds’ with great power and glory.

²⁷Then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

²⁸“From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. ²⁹So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. ³⁰Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. ³¹Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

³²“But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. ³³Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come.

³⁴It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. ³⁵Therefore, keep awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, ³⁶or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. ³⁷And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

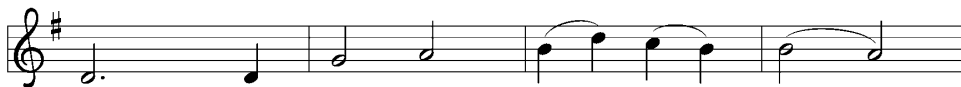
The assembly is seated. Time for reflection follows the sermon.

HYMN OF THE DAY ELW #435 *Lo! He Comes with Clouds Descending*

The assembly stands to proclaim the Word of God in song.



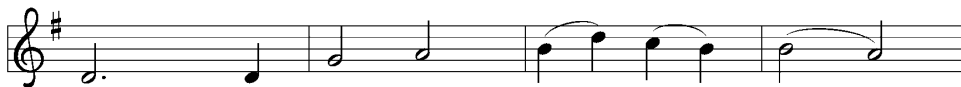
1 Lo! he comes with clouds de - scend - ing,
2 Now re - demp - tion, long - ex - pect - ed,
3 Yea, a - men, let all a - dore thee,



once for our sal - va - tion slain;
comes in sol - emn splen - dor near;
high on thine e - ter - nal throne;



thou - sand thou - sand saints at - tend - ing
all the saints this world re - ject - ed
Sav - ior, take the pow'r and glo - ry,



join to sing the glad re - frain:
thrill the trum - pet sound to hear:
claim the king - dom as thine own.



Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le -
Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le -
Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le -



lu - ia! Christ the Lord re - turns to reign.
lu - ia! See the day of God ap - pear!
lu - ia! Thou shalt reign, and thou a - lone!

APOSTLES' CREED

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.*
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

**Or, "he descended into hell," another translation of this text in widespread use.*

PRAYERS

With hope and expectation, we offer our prayers for the church, the world, and all who await God's day of restoration.

A brief silence.

Call your church into holy fellowship as we await the restoration of all things. Reenergize your faithful people to live with hope and compassion, especially those who serve as missionaries near and far. Center us on your promise to come among us and make all things new. Hurry, God. Hear our prayers.

Tear the heavens and come down.

All creation signals your presence, O God: the vastness of the cosmos, the turn of the seasons, and living things that both rest and flourish. Rekindle our commitment to care for the earth. Hurry, God. Hear our prayers.

Tear the heavens and come down.

Let the nations tremble at your holy presence, that justice and liberation prevail in all corners of the earth. Restore peace to nations in conflict, teach righteousness to corrupt leaders and systems, and bring stability to areas facing uncertain futures. Bless our neighbors in Myanmar and Thailand – empower all who seek to relieve suffering and build justice, and nurture the witness of churches.

Hurry, God. Hear our prayers.

Tear the heavens and come down.

Enrich the spirits of all who feel hopeless, fearful, or despairing. Stay close to those who await healing or relief. Deliver all in any need.

Hurry, God. Hear our prayers.

Tear the heavens and come down.

Be with those who keep awake at night: nurses working overnight shifts, caregivers of newborns and aging adults, stargazers, those who are anxious, or those who are traveling. Reveal to all that the dark can be a place of calm and comfort filled with your presence.

Hurry, God. Hear our prayers.

Tear the heavens and come down.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

You have sent out your angels and gathered your faithful people from every time and place, calling them into one fellowship of saints. Bless the witness of those who dwell in your eternal presence, especially Francis Xavier, John of Damascus, Nicholas, and Ambrose.

Hurry, God. Hear our prayers.

Tear the heavens and come down.

Listen to these and all our prayers, O God of hosts, and restore us with your great and everlasting mercy.

Amen.

SHARING OF THE PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you always.

And also with you.

*We invite those worshipping by livestream to share a sign of peace in the chat, and for those in person we turn to offer them our greeting of peace before sharing a sign of peace with one another: **Peace be with you!***

MEAL

God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ

OFFERING

*This congregation serves our neighbors, community, and the world through the participation and support of its members and guests. Because offerings are never just about us, this month we are sharing a portion of your gifts with **Bethel Lutheran Church**, a diverse, urban ELCA congregation in the Miller neighborhood of Gary, Indiana (part of NW Indiana Conference of I-K Synod) <http://bethelmiller.org> and <http://facebook.com/bethelmillerbeach>.*

If you wish to give electronically, browse to our secure on-line portal at clcvalpo.org/give or use [our CLC app](#) (download at clcvalpo.org/app).



OFFERTORY (8:00 am): *The Angel Gabriel from Heaven Came*

arr. Manz

TABLE PRAYER

And so, with joyful hearts, we join the angels in their song . . .

(An ancient practice invites us to make the sign of the cross in honor of Jesus at the words "Blessed is the one.")



Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow'r and



God of might, heav - en and earth are full of your



glo - ry. Ho - san - na in the high - est.



Bless - ed is the one who comes in the name of the



Lord. Ho - san - na, ho - san - na in the high - est.



Ho - san - na, ho - san - na in the high - est.

...we proclaim the mystery of faith.

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

...into your kingdom of perfect mercy, justice, and love.

Amen.

LORD'S PRAYER

Children: The Spirit makes us one. We pray as Jesus taught us:



Our Fa - ther in heav - en, hal - lowed be your name,
your king - dom come, your will be done, on earth as in heav - en.
Give us to - day our dai - ly bread. For - give us our sins as we
for - give those who sin a - gainst us. Save us from the time of tri - al
and de - liv - er us from e - vil. For the king - dom, the pow'r,
and the glo - ry are yours, now and for - ev - er. A - men.

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

The time is now! Taste and see God's goodness!

Thanks be to God.

DISTRIBUTION

The assembly is seated.

Holy Communion is the family meal of God's people, to which we come at Jesus' invitation. The body and blood of Christ, in the bread and wine, are his real presence with us and offer the gift of forgiveness because of his death and resurrection. Drawn together and strengthened by this meal, we are given a taste of the fullness of God's coming kingdom, and are equipped to be the hands and feet of God's love in the world. All baptized Christians are always welcome at the Lord's table.

The pastor invites those worshipping via **livestream** to commune:

The body of Christ, given for you.

Amen (receive the bread)

The blood of Christ, shed for you.

Amen (receive the cup)

In-person distribution: When indicated by the ushers, come up the right-hand ramp to approach the altar rail. When finished you may leave individually without being dismissed. **WINE** is lighter-colored, and **GRAPE JUICE** is dark; they are received via individual cups in the trays. The **COMMON CUP** is available for anyone who wishes. **USED GLASSES** are placed in the basket located near the ramp. **GLUTEN-FREE BREAD IS AVAILABLE**, please indicate to the server that you require this. Also, if you unable to come up to the altar, let the usher know so that pastor can bring communion to you.

LAMB OF GOD



Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the world; have mer-cy on



us. Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the world; have



mer-cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the



world; grant us peace, grant us peace.

1 O Lord, how shall I meet you, how wel - come you a - right?
 2 I lay in fet - ters, groan - ing; you came to set me free.
 3 Love caused your in - car - na - tion; love brought you down to me.
 4 Re - joice, then, you sad - heart - ed, who sit in deep - est gloom,

Your peo - ple long to greet you, my hope, my heart's de - light!
 I stood, my shame be - moan - ing; you came to hon - or me.
 Your thirst for my sal - va - tion pro - cured my lib - er - ty.
 who mourn your joys de - part - ed and trem - ble at your doom.

Oh, kin - dle, Lord most ho - ly, your lamp with - in my breast
 A glo - rious crown you give me, a trea - sure safe on high
 Oh, love be - yond all tell - ing, that led you to em - brace
 All hail the Lord's ap - pear - ing! O glo - rious Sun, now come,

to do in spir - it low - ly all that may please you best.
 that will not fail or leave me as earth - ly rich - es fly.
 in love, all love ex - cel - ling, our lost and fall - en race.
 send forth your beams so cheer - ing and guide us safe - ly home.

ELW #248 *People, Look East*

1 Peo - ple, look east. The time is near of the crown - ing
 2 Fur - rows, be glad. Though earth is bare, one more seed is
 3 Stars, keep the watch. When night is dim, one more light the
 4 An - gels an - nounce with shouts of mirth him who brings new

of the year. Make your house fair as you are a - ble,
 plant - ed there. Give up your strength the seed to nour - ish,
 bowl shall brim, shin - ing be - yond the frost - y weath - er,
 life to earth. Set ev - 'ry peak and val - ley hum - ming

trim the hearth and set the ta - ble. Peo - ple, look
 that in course the flow'r may flour - ish. Peo - ple, look
 bright as sun and moon to - geth - er. Peo - ple, look
 with the word, the Lord is com - ing. Peo - ple, look

east, and sing to - day— Love, the Guest, is on the way.
 east, and sing to - day— Love, the Rose, is on the way.
 east, and sing to - day— Love, the Star, is on the way.
 east, and sing to - day— Love, the Lord, is on the way.

Text: Eleanor Farjeon, 1881–1965

Music: BESANCON, French carol; arr. Barry Rose, b. 1934

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After all have returned to their places, the assembly stands as the minister continues.
The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in his grace.
Amen.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Blessed be your name, O God, for we have feasted on your Word, Christ Jesus, the joy and delight of our hearts. Strengthened by this food, send us to gather the world to your banquet, where none are left out and all are satisfied. In Jesus' name we pray.
Amen.

SENDING

God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world

INVITATIONS

Brief invitations are shared, especially those related to the assembly's participation in God's mission in the world.

SENDING CHARGE

As you leave this place, remember:
whether you are waiting for a new beginning
or just waiting for something to end,
God is sustaining you.
Keep alert; trust God; seek peace.

BLESSING

God our Creator, who made the starlit sky, blesses you.
Jesus ✠ our Redeemer, who arrives at just the right time, blesses you.
The Holy Spirit our Enlivener, who sparks hope for the hopeless, blesses you.
You are blessed in the name of God the Three in One.
Amen.

SENDING HYMN ELW #260 *The King Shall Come*



1 The King shall come when morn-ing dawns and light tri - um-phant breaks,
2 Not as of old a lit - tle child, to bear and fight and die,
3 Oh, bright - er than the ris - ing morn when Christ, vic - to - rious, rose
4 Oh, bright - er than that glo - rious morn shall dawn up - on our race
5 The King shall come when morn-ing dawns and light and beau - ty brings.



when beau - ty gilds the east - ern hills and life to joy a - wakes.
but crowned with glo - ry like the sun that lights the morn-ing sky.
and left the lone - some place of death, de - spite the rage of foes.
the day when Christ in splen - dor comes, and we shall see his face.
Hail, Christ the Lord! Your peo - ple pray: come quick - ly, King of kings.

Text: John Brownlie, 1859–1925

Music: CONSOLATION, A. Davison, *Kentucky Harmony*, 1816

Children join the pastors to send us in mission

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Wait for the Lord.

Thanks be to God!

POSTLUDE

People, Look East

Langlois

As worship concludes we move to the Gathering Place, where we are invited to greet one another and share in fellowship.

Worship Leaders

| | <u>8:00 a.m.</u> | <u>10:30 a.m.</u> |
|------------------------------|--|---------------------------|
| Acolyte | Olivia Magiera | Noah DeJesus |
| Lector | Danelle Rivera | Lena Gibson |
| Prayer Assistant | Betty Lockett | Phil Hahn |
| Communion Assistants | Erin Schmidgall Chris Schmidgall | Phil Hahn Holly Knauff |
| Ushers | Luke Venstrom Irene Adams | Doc Knauff |
| Sound/Light | Lance Nolting | Tony Reinhold |
| Video/Livestream | ----- | Ben Crill |
| Pastors | Rev. Timothy Knauff, Jr. Rev. Erica Gibson-Even | |
| Director of Music Ministries | Brian Bartusch | |
| Worship Participants: | Sanctuary Choir Daniel Gibson-Even, cantor | |
| Communion Baker | Christine Bull | |

COMMEMORATIONS

Week of December 3

December 3

Francis Xavier, missionary to Asia, died 1552

A native of the Basque region of Spain, Xavier became a missionary to India, Southeast Asia, Japan, and the Philippines. He also helped to found the Society of Jesus (Jesuits).

December 4

John of Damascus, theologian and hymnwriter, died around 749

A monk in an abbey near Jerusalem, John wrote many hymns as well as theological works. One of his works, *The Fount of Wisdom*, remained influential for centuries.

December 6

Nicholas, Bishop of Myra, died around 342

Little is known about Nicholas, except that he was a bishop in present-day Turkey. According to legend, he was famous for his giving to the poor, and so has become a symbol of anonymous gift-giving.

December 7

Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, died 397

While a governor of northern Italy, Ambrose was elected bishop of Milan on the same day he was baptized. He was a famous preacher, a writer of hymns we still sing today, and helped lead St. Augustine to faith.

Ecumenical Prayer Cycle

This week we pray for the churches and people of **Myanmar, Thailand.**

We **give thanks** for:

- the beauty of these countries and their people, and their many distinctive Buddhist temples
- those who long have struggled that these countries might become more democratic
- the faithful witness of churches, which have advocated with others for greater justice
- efforts to protect the environment and resources in these countries

We **pray** for:

- minority ethnic and religious groups who continue to experience discrimination, persecution or even genocide (such as the Rohingyas), and for greater interfaith understanding and tolerance for ethnic and religious diversity
- those victimized by sex tourism and exploitation, and those who perpetuate such acts
- political stability and progress toward democratic rule
- economic justice for all people, and environmental protection, as these countries

Stewardship Snippet

“Yet, O LORD, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand.” –Isaiah 64:8

Knowing that we are creations of God helps shape our self-identity. But Isaiah adds a wrinkle: we are clay that God, the potter, shapes and forms. As good stewards of our lives, we prayerfully and eagerly invite the Holy Spirit to help us discern how God wants to mold us. The closer we are to who God means us to be, the happier and more fulfilled we are.

Advent Message

Out of Time

Have you ever had a calendar “push notification” pop up on your phone? When Advent arrives, it’s as though one of those push notifications appears in our collective Christian consciousness: *Jesus is on the way! Would you like to plan something?*

This urgency is not entirely due to our human rhythms of remembering and forgetting. As the church year barrels to its close and then careens into a new beginning, our scripture readings are preoccupied with time—*the day of the Lord, God’s time* versus *our time*, the mysterious scheduling of *the day and the hour*.

This urgency is intensified by the unpredictable way in which the lectionary interacts with time. The gospel lessons skip backward and forward over Jesus’ life like someone trying to find the right track on a vinyl recording: one week, Jesus speaks of a day to come, the next week, John the Baptist speaks of Jesus’ coming.

In Advent, past and future collapse into God’s present, and the lines blur between Jesus’ first and second arrivals.

This is chronologically disorienting in a way that seems intentional. God, who created time and exists beyond it, is busy within, around, and beyond our human experience of time.

Just what is God doing when it comes to time and to us? This Advent, we reflect on how God uses our experience of time to meet us, challenge us, bless us, shape us, and call us into holy endings and new beginnings.

We’ll explore two senses of being *out of time*. Advent thrusts upon us the reality that time is limited. We run out of time to reconcile, to prepare, to make a change. Yet even as *we* are running out of time, *God* is outside of time entirely.

God’s infinite being and infinite patience cut through our fear as God enters human time to dwell with us: *Emmanuel*, God-with-us.

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