



Christ
Lutheran
CHURCH

2610 Campbell Street
Valparaiso, Indiana 46385
(219) 462-6660 • clcvalpo.org



December 21, 2025

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."*

ABOUT WORSHIP

We gather to worship weekly to hear and remember our shared 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 of you.

If you have a prayer request, note it on a yellow card from the seatback holder and pass it to an usher; 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.

Today Isaiah prophesies that a young woman will bear a son and name him Emmanuel. The gospel is Matthew's account of the annunciation and birth of the one named Emmanuel, God-with-us. During these final days of Advent we pray, "O come, O come, Emmanuel," a beloved hymn based on the *O Antiphons*, ancient prayers appointed for the seven days preceding Christmas. On this final Sunday of Advent we prepare to celebrate the birth of the one born to save us from the power of sin and death.

GATHERING

The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God

PRELUDE

Noël

D'Aquin

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 live chat 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).*



GATHERING HYMN ELW #257

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel (stz. 1,2,4,5,6)

- 1 O come, O come, Emmanuel,
and ransom captive Israel,
that mourns in lonely exile here
until the Son of God appear.

Refrain

*Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to you, O Israel.*

- 2 O come, O Wisdom from on high,
embracing all things far and nigh:
in strength and beauty come and stay;
teach us your will and guide our way. **Refrain**
- 4 O come, O Branch of Jesse, free
your own from Satan's tyranny;
from depths of hell your people save,
and give them vict'ry o'er the grave. **Refrain**
- 5 O come, O Key of David, come,
and open wide our heav'nly home;
make safe the way that leads on high,
and close the path to misery. **Refrain**
- 6 O come, O Dayspring, come and cheer;
O Sun of justice, now draw near.
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
and death's dark shadow put to flight. **Refrain**

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!*

THANKSGIVING FOR LIGHT FOR ADVENT (The Advent Wreath is lit)

3 Leader

We give you thanks, O

God, for it is you who called forth light, and you

led your people Is - ra - el with won - ders and with signs.

Lead us in this sea - son's wait - ing with won - ders speak - ing

hope and signs of Je - sus' in - car - na - tion;

for your mer - cy is our light and your com - pas - sion is our guide, and with cre-a-tion we glo - ri-fy you through the Son and

in the Spir - it now and ev - er - more.

A - men.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

A brief silence is kept before the prayer.

God with us,
borne by Mary's flesh
beyond all convention:
give us the faith of Joseph
to see the Spirit's work
where the world sees only shame;
to listen to the promise
and waken to the cry
of life renewed and love reborn;
through Jesus Christ, the one who is to come.

Amen.

WORD

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

CHILDREN'S TIME

The assembly is seated as children are invited for a time together.

Listen to the Word That God Has Spoken



Lis-ten to the word that God has spo-ken; lis-ten to the One who is



close at hand; lis - ten to the voice that be - gan cre - a - tion;



lis - ten e - ven if you don't un - der - stand.

READING: Isaiah 7:10-16

An Israelite and Aramean military coalition presented a serious threat to King Ahaz of Judah. In response, Ahaz decided to secure his throne and kingdom by seeking Assyrian help. Isaiah reminds Ahaz that human attempts to establish security will fail. The prophet gives the sign that is the only source of true safety: Immanuel, God is with us!

¹⁰ The LORD spoke to Ahaz, saying, ¹¹ “Ask a sign of the LORD your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven.” ¹² But Ahaz said, “I will not ask, and I will not put the LORD to the test.” ¹³ Then Isaiah said, “Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary mortals that you weary my God also? ¹⁴ Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son and shall name him Immanuel. ¹⁵ He shall eat curds and honey by the time he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good. ¹⁶ For before the child knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land before whose two kings you are in dread will be deserted.”

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.



PSALM: Psalm 80:1–7, 17–19

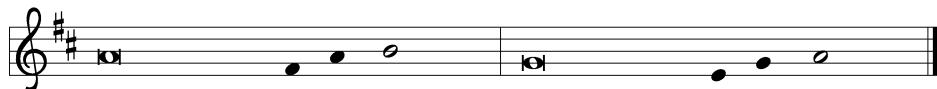
The congregation is invited to sing the psalm refrain when indicated (R). Verses will be chanted alternately by the leader and the people.

Refrain



Let your face shine up - on us, and we shall be saved.

Psalm Tone



Hear, O Shepherd of Israel, leading Joseph like a flock;
shine forth, you that are enthroned up- on the cherubim.

²**In the presence of Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh,
stir up your strength and come to help us.**

³Restore us, O God;
let your face shine upon us, and we shall be saved.

⁴**O LORD God of hosts,
how long will your anger fume when your people pray? R**

⁵You have fed them with the bread of tears;
you have given them bowls of tears to drink.

⁶**You have made us the derision of our neighbors,
and our enemies laugh us to scorn.**

⁷Restore us, O God of hosts;
let your face shine upon us, and we shall be saved.

¹⁷**Let your hand be upon the one at your right hand,
the one you have made so strong for yourself.**

¹⁸And so will we never turn a way from you;
give us life, that we may call up on your name.

¹⁹**Restore us, O LORD God of hosts;
let your face shine upon us, and we shall be saved. R**

READING: Romans 1:1-7

Most of the Christians in Rome do not know Paul. In this letter's opening he introduces himself as an apostle divinely appointed to spread God's gospel. The gospel's content is the promised coming of Christ, and Paul's mission is to bring about the obedience of faith among all nations, including his Roman audience.

¹ Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God,² which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures,³ the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh⁴ and was declared to be Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord,⁵ through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the gentiles for the sake of his name,⁶ including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ,

⁷ To all God's beloved in Rome, who are called to be saints:

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

The assembly stands to welcome the Gospel.

C Al - le - lu - ia. Lord, to whom shall we go?
You have the words of e - ter - nal life. Al- le - lu - ia.

GOSPEL: Matthew 1:18-25

Matthew's story of Jesus' birth focuses on the role of Joseph, who adopts the divinely-begotten child into the family of David and obediently gives him the name Jesus, which means "God saves."

The holy gospel according to Matthew.

Glory to you, O Lord.

¹⁸ Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be pregnant from the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to divorce her quietly. ²⁰ But just when he had

resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.²¹ She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.”²² All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

²³ “Look, the virgin shall become pregnant and give birth to a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel,”

which means, “God is with us.”²⁴ When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife²⁵ but had no marital relations with her until she had given birth to a son, and he named him Jesus.

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

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

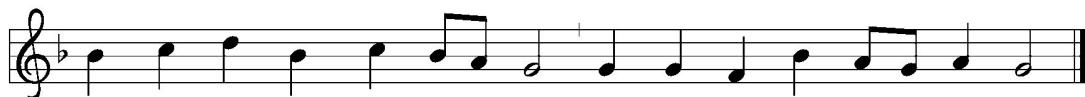
HYMN OF THE DAY ELW #263

Savior of the Nations, Come

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



- 1 Sav - ior of the na - tions, come; vir - gin's son, make here your home.
- 2 Not by hu - man flesh and blood, but the mys - tic Breath of God,
- 3 Won-drous birth—oh, won-drous child—from his throne, a vir - gin mild!
- 4 From God's heart the Sav - ior speeds, back to God his path-way leads;



Mar - vel now, O heav'n and earth: God has cho - sen such a birth.
was the Word of God made flesh, fruit of wom - an, blos - som fresh.
Ver - y God, and Mar - y's son, ea - ger now his race to run!
out to van - quish death's com - mand, back to reign at God's right hand.

- 5 Now your manger, shining bright,
hallows night with newborn light.
Night cannot this light subdue;
let our faith shine ever new.

- 6 Praise we sing to Christ the Lord,
virgin's son, incarnate Word!
To the holy Trinity
praise we sing eternally!

NICENE CREED

We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father;
through him all things were made.

For us and for our salvation

he came down from heaven,
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary
and became truly human.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.

On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the scriptures;
he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen

PRAYERS

Our prayers draw on the Ecumenical Prayer Cycle and the Church's calendar of Commemorations. Further information is found each week at the end of the bulletin.

As we prepare for the fullness of Christ's presence, let us pray for a world that yearns for new hope.

A brief silence.

God our shepherd, let your Spirit move with power throughout the church. Give discernment and wisdom to our bishops, pastors, deacons, and lay leaders. Take away our fear, so that we serve and love, confident that you are guiding us. God, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

God our source, awaken us to the beauty of the earth and the marvelous variety of life. Unite humankind in repairing and caring for your creation. Protect creatures and habitats in peril due to rising seas and warming temperatures. God, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

God our vision, raise up leaders in every nation who dream of freedom and justice for all people. We pray for the work of international organizations that promote peace and human rights. In Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan, and China, grant peace and justice for all; empower the ministries and witness of churches. God, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

God our helper, come to the aid of all who cry out to you. Shelter migrants, refugees, and those fleeing war and famine. Bring relief to individuals and families experiencing hunger, homelessness, or impoverishment. Comfort any who are isolated or lonely.

God, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

God our Emmanuel, you are with us in our life together. We give you thanks for gathering us in worship and fellowship, and we remember those who cannot be present. Watch over those who travel. Heal the sick and speed their recovery. God, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

We pray for our Little Lamb Preschool community, for Teri and Dani who teach the Outstanding Owls class, and for these students and their families: Ajay, Ben, Charlie, Colson, Ella, Eve, George, Karaline, Maddison, Madi, Makenna, Parker, Ty, Ginny, and Will. Bless the students in their growth and learning, that they might know your love more and more each day; strengthen and equip their families in their calling to nurture your beloved children. God of grace,

hear our prayer.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

God our hope, you bring life out of death, and you promise to be our God forever. Shine upon the faithful who now rest in the fulfillment of your promise, including Stephen and John, and bring us also into your blessed reign of peace. God, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

God of our longing, you know our deepest needs. By your Spirit, gather our prayers and join them with the prayers of all your children. In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen.

SHARING OF THE PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you always.

And also with you.

We invite those worshiping by livestream to share a sign of peace in the live 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 Conf. Of IK Synod)
bethelmiller.org and facebook.com/bethelmillerbeach*

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



OFFERTORY ANTHEM (8:00 am)

Une Vierge Pucelle

Le Bègue

OFFERTORY (10:30 am):

Child of Light

Pethel

Child of Light, we wait for you now, beneath the stars of heaven we bow; Child of Wonder, be our guide. Lead us on through dark of the night. Child of Truth, we seek your face, how we need your love and grace; be unto us our Saviour, King. From our hearts these gifts we bring. Child of Light, come live within, let your joy on earth begin; Lift our eyes and fill our hearts, nevermore from us depart. Shine your holy light on us now, help us understand somehow; this matchless gift from heaven above, Child of Light and Child of Love.

PRESENTATION OF THE GIFTS

The assembly stands as the gifts are brought forward.

C Let the vine-yards be fruit-ful, Lord, fill to the brim our
cup of bless-ing. Gath-er a har-vest from the seeds that were sown,
that we may be fed, we may be fed with the bread of life.

Gath-er the hopes and the dreams of all; u - nite them with the
prayers we of - fer now. Grace our ta-ble with your pres- ence,

and give us a fore - taste of the feast to come.

GREAT THANKSGIVING

The Lord be with you. And al - so with you.

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

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

The pastor continues the prayer then all join in singing:

SANCTUS

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

Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord,

Lord God of pow'r and might, ³heav- en and earth are

full of your glo - ry. Ho - san - na in the high - est.

Bless - ed, bless - ed is he who comes in the name of the

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

TABLE PRAYER

LORD'S PRAYER

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

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.**

Give us today our daily bread.

**Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those
who sin against us.**

**Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours,
now and forever. Amen.**

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Here is life. God is with us.

Come, receive what God has promised.

Thanks be to God!

DISTRIBUTION

*The assembly is seated. 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; wine is received either by Common Cup or from individual cups in the trays. **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.

LAMB OF GOD

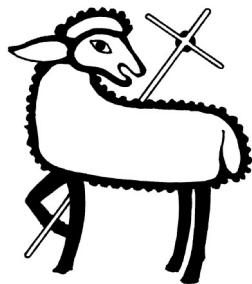
Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the world;

have mer- cy on us, have mer- cy on us, have mer - ey.

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

have mer- cy on us, have mer- cy on us, have mer - ey.

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



COMMUNION MUSIC

ELW #241 *O Lord, How Shall I Meet You*

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 #250 *Blessed Be the God of Israel*

1 Blessed be the God of Is - ra - el who comes to set us free
 2 With prom-ised mer - cy will God still the cov - e - nant re - call,
 3 My child, as proph-et of the Lord you will pre-pare the way,

and rais - es up new hope for us: a Branch from Da - vid's tree.
 the oath once sworn to A - bra-ham, from foes to save us all;
 to tell God's peo - ple they are saved from sin's e - ter - nal sway.

So have the proph-ets long de-clared that with a mighty arm
 that we might wor - ship with - out fear and of - fer lives of praise,
 Then shall God's mer - cy from on high shine forth and nev - er cease

God would turn back our en - e - mies and all who wish us harm.
 in ho - li - ness and righ - teous-ness to serve God all our days.
 to drive a - way the gloom of death and lead us in - to peace.

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.

POST COMMUNION CANTICLE ELW #200 *Now Lord*



Now, Lord, you let your ser - vant go in
peace: your word has been ful - filled. My
own eyes have seen the sal - va - tion which you have pre -
pared in the sight of all peo-ple: a light to re -
veal you to the na-tions and the glo - ry of your
peo-ple Is - ra - el. Glo - ry to the Fa - ther,
and to the Son, and to the Ho - ly Spir - it,
as it was in the be - gin - ning, is now, and
will be for - ev - er. A - men.

SENDING

God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world

INVITATIONS

The assembly is seated as brief invitations are shared, especially those related to the assembly's participation in God's mission in the world.

BLESSING

May God who comes among us,
Father, [†] Son, and Holy Spirit,
grant you patience in waiting, peace in the darkness,
and good news to share today and always.

Amen.

SENDING HYMN ELW #254 *Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus*



1 Come, thou long-ex - pect-ed Je - sus, born to set thy peo-ple free;
2 Born thy peo-ple to de - liv - er, born a child, and yet a king;



from our fears and sins re - lease us; let us find our rest in thee.
born to reign in us for - ev - er, now thy gra - cious king-dom bring.



Is - rael's strength and con-so - la - tion, hope of all the earth thou art,
By thine own e - ter - nal Spir-it rule in all our hearts a - lone;



dear de - sire of ev - 'ry na - tion, joy of ev - 'ry long-ing heart.
by thine all - suf - fi - cient mer - it raise us to thy glo - rious throne.

Children join the pastors to send us in mission.

DISMISSAL

Children: Go in peace. Keep awake.

Thanks be to God!

POSTLUDE

Wake, Awake! For Night is Flying

Manz

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

Ecumenical Prayer Cycle

This week we pray for the churches and people of **Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan, and the Mainland of China**

We give **thanks** for:

- the long and complex history of China, with its many artefacts, cultures and traditions that have developed over millennia
- those who established missions and churches in the past, and the determination of Chinese Christians to contextualize the church here and now
- those who boldly live out their faith, challenging injustices even when they fear persecution
- the economic growth and development that have lifted many out of poverty
- the steps China is taking to counter huge environmental challenges.

We **pray** for:

- those left behind and further marginalized by rising economic growth, especially women and peasants in rural areas
- peace, understanding, and cooperation between the mainland of China, Hong Kong and the global community
- a growth in prophetic witness of the Chinese church in society
- for greater understanding and cooperation between Taiwan and the Mainland of China
- spiritual meaning and freedom from captivity to economic growth and consumerism.

COMMEMORATIONS Week of December 21, 2025

December 26 ~ Stephen, Deacon and Martyr

Stephen was a deacon and the first martyr of the church. He was one of those seven upon whom the apostles laid hands after they had been chosen to serve widows and others in need. Later, Stephen's preaching angered the temple authorities, and they ordered him to be put to death by stoning.

December 27 ~ John, Apostle and Evangelist

The son of Zebedee and brother of James, John was one of the twelve disciples and witness to the transfiguration. Tradition has named him also the writer of the Gospel of John, the three New Testament letters bearing his name, as well as Revelation.

Worship Leaders	<u>8:00 a.m.</u>	<u>10:30 a.m.</u>
Acolyte	Sam Venstrom	Noah DeJesus
Lector	Lanie Steinwart	Becky Fry
Prayer Assistant	Lanie Steinwart	Doug Schmidt
Communion Assistants	Scott Steinwart Kathy Sutherland	Jacquie Chevalier
Ushers	Vickie Copeland Gregg Copeland	
Sound/Light		Tony Reinhold
Video/Livestream	_____	Gibson-Even Family
Pastors	Rev. Timothy Knauff, Jr Rev. Erica Gibson-Even	
Director of Music Ministries	Brian Bartush	
Cantor	Mike & Lois Felten (10:30 am)	
Worship Participants	Sanctuary Choir	
Communion Baker	Lois Felten	

Promises Made Real

Dreams are delicate things, often hanging in our minds only long enough to evaporate in the morning like dew on the grass. Yet dreams can also endure and shape the arc of social movements and the identities of people near and far. Joseph has the rare privilege of an *angelic* dream, of all things—a visitation from a divine messenger, beckoning a change of heart and a change of direction for him and the person he loves.

It is no small thing to change direction in life, especially when family expectations and social norms can make life harder than it needs to be. Yet, Joseph and Mary do a remarkable thing as they face uncertainty: They trust God's promise that something incredible is about to happen. They take the angel's words to heart and lean into the possibility of God's Holy Spirit doing something neither of them expected.

Joseph and Mary are at a precipice, a pivot point, a threshold, a new beginning. Isaiah's language reminds us of the relationship that stands at the center of this divine arrival: God is with us, God is with humanity, God is with (and in) the world! *Emmanuel!*

We stand at a similar threshold every time God gathers us in worship. In word and sacrament, God's promise unfolds anew, birthing love and grace in our lives. Such mercy may seem like a fever dream, a vanishing vision, an impossibility. Yet it is the very thing that undergirds our lives of faith, turning us time and again to what is most important: God's promises fulfilled. As God chose to be with Mary and Joseph, God has chosen to be with us, as we together bear witness to the Spirit who brings about a world where sin is forgiven and God is ever near.

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