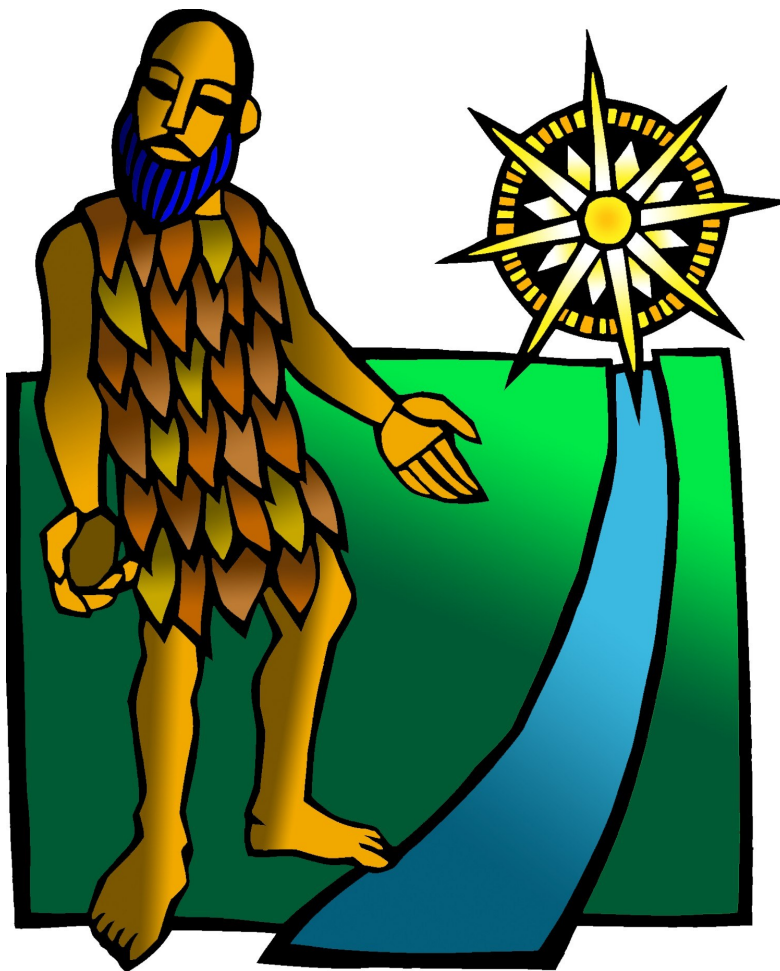




Christ Lutheran

CHURCH

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



December 14, 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 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.

A note of joyful expectation marks today's worship. Isaiah announces that the desert shall rejoice and blossom, and Jesus points to the unexpected and transforming signs of God's reign. We wait with patience for the coming of the Lord, even as we rejoice at his presence among us this day: in word and holy supper, in church and in our homes, in silent reflection and in works of justice and love. We pray that God would open our eyes and ears to the wonders of Christ's advent among us.

GATHERING

The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God

PRELUDE

Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence

Tucker

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).*



1 A - wake! A - wake, and greet the new morn, for
 2 To us, to all in sor - row and fear, Em -
 3 In dark - est night his com - ing shall be, when
 4 Re - joice, re - joice, take heart in the night, though



an - gels her - ald its dawn - ing. Sing out your joy, for
 man - u - el comes a - sing - ing, his hum - ble song is
 all the world is de - spair - ing, as morn - ing light so
 dark the win - ter and cheer - less, the ris - ing sun shall



soon he is born, be - hold! the Child of our long - ing.
 qui - et and near, yet fills the earth with its ring - ing;
 qui - et and free, so warm and gen - tle and car - ing.
 crown you with light, be strong and lov - ing and fear - less.



Come as a ba - by weak and poor, to bring all hearts to -
 mu - sic to heal the bro - ken soul and hymns of lov - ing -
 Then shall the mute break forth in song, the lame shall leap in
 Love be our song and love our prayer and love our end - less



geth - er, he o - pens wide the heav'n - ly door and
 kind - ness, the thun - der of his an - thems roll to
 won - der, the weak be raised a - bove the strong, and
 sto - ry; may God fill ev - 'ry day we share and



lives now in - side us for - ev - er.
 shat - ter all ha - tred and blind - ness.
 weap - ons be bro - ken a - sun - der.
 bring us at last in - to glo - ry.

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 peo-ple Is - ra - el with won - ders and with signs.

Assembly

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

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

Leader

for your mer - cy is our light and your com - pas - sion is our guide,

Assembly

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 of the burning sand
and thirsty grounds:
you called John into the wilderness
to announce a new creation
far from palaces of royal power;
make us ready for your intensity,
the judgement that opens our senses
to the poverty of our world
and calls to life
what lingers in death;
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.

HANDBELL ANTHEM:

The King Shall Come

Norman

READING: Isaiah 35:1-10

The prophet describes the return from the Babylonian captivity as a joyous procession to Zion. God's coming reign will bring a renewal of creation in which health and wholeness will be restored. There is no need for fear, for God is coming to save.

¹ The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad;
the desert shall rejoice and blossom;
like the crocus ² it shall blossom abundantly
and rejoice with joy and shouting.
The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it,
the majesty of Carmel and Sharon.
They shall see the glory of the LORD,
the majesty of our God.

³ Strengthen the weak hands
and make firm the feeble knees.
⁴ Say to those who are of a fearful heart,
“Be strong, do not fear!
Here is your God.
He will come with vengeance,
with terrible recompense.
He will come and save you.”

⁵ Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,
and the ears of the deaf shall be opened;
⁶ then the lame shall leap like a deer,
and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy.
For waters shall break forth in the wilderness
and streams in the desert;
⁷ the burning sand shall become a pool
and the thirsty ground springs of water;
the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp;
the grass shall become reeds and rushes.

⁸ A highway shall be there,
and it shall be called the Holy Way;
the unclean shall not travel on it,
but it shall be for God's people;
no traveler, not even fools, shall go astray.
⁹ No lion shall be there,
nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it;
they shall not be found there,

but the redeemed shall walk there.
¹⁰ And the ransomed of the LORD shall return
 and come to Zion with singing;
 everlasting joy shall be upon their heads;
 they shall obtain joy and gladness,
 and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

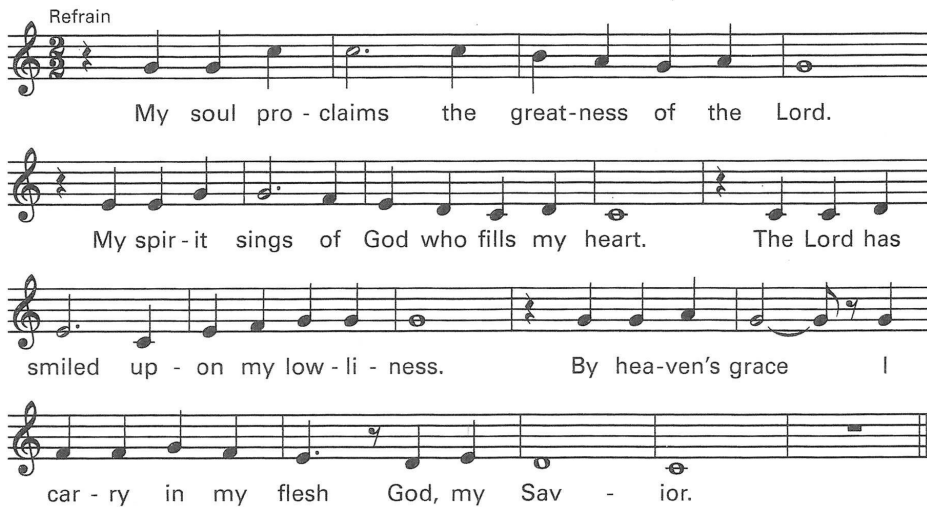
PSALM: *God My Savior*
The assembly stands to proclaim the word of God in song.

Schutte

(The hymn will be introduced by the Cantor; the Congregation is invited to sing the refrain and stanzas 2 and 3)

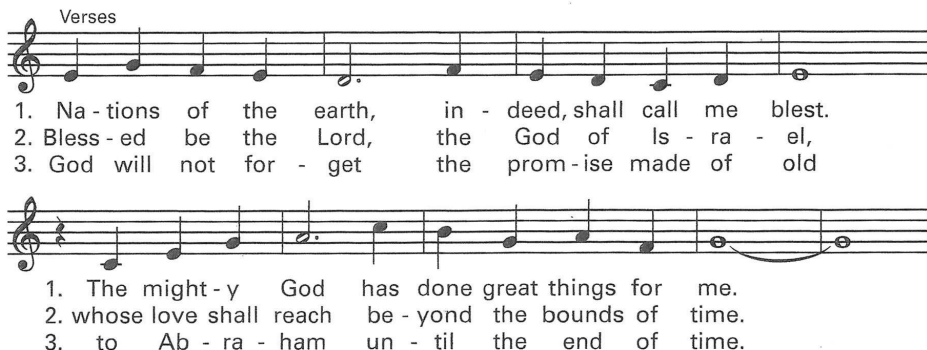
Salve Mater Misericordiae
 Adapted by Dan Schutte

Refrain



My soul pro - claims the great-ness of the Lord.
 My spir - it sings of God who fills my heart. The Lord has
 smiled up - on my low - li - ness. By hea-ven's grace I
 car - ry in my flesh God, my Sav - ior.

Verses



1. Na - tions of the earth, in - deed, shall call me blest.
 2. Bless - ed be the Lord, the God of Is - ra - el,
 3. God will not for - get the prom - ise made of old
 1. The might - y God has done great things for me.
 2. whose love shall reach be - yond the bounds of time.
 3. to Ab - ra - ham un - til the end of time.

1. The Lord has raised the low - ly from the dust;
 2. The Lord has filled the hun - gry with good things,
 3. The Lord re - stores the hope of Is - ra - el.

1. the kings of earth shall tum - ble from their thrones.
 2. and sent the proud a - way with emp - ty hands.
 3. Our eyes have seen the sav - ing hand of God.

to Refrain

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

The assembly stands to welcome the Gospel.

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 11:2-11

John the Baptist expects the Messiah to bring God's judgment upon the earth (Matt. 3:11-12). From a prison cell, he wonders whether Jesus is the one who will do this. Jesus' response indicates that God's reign is indeed being fulfilled already through healing and restoration.

The holy gospel according to Matthew.

Glory to you, O Lord.

² When John heard in prison what the Messiah was doing, he sent word by his disciples ³ and said to him, "Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?" ⁴ Jesus answered them, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: ⁵ the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, those with a skin disease are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them. ⁶ And blessed is anyone who takes no offense at me."

⁷ As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to look at? A reed shaken by the wind? ⁸ What, then, did you go out to see? Someone dressed in soft robes? Look, those who wear soft robes are in

royal palaces. ⁹ What, then, did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. ¹⁰ This is the one about whom it is written,

‘See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way before you.’

¹¹ “Truly I tell you, among those born of women no one has arisen greater than John the Baptist, yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.”

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 #264 *Prepare the Royal Highway*

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



- 1 Pre - pare the roy - al high - way; the King of kings is near!
- 2 God's peo - ple, see him com - ing: your own e - ter - nal king!
- 3 Then fling the gates wide o - pen to greet your prom - ised king!
- 4 His is no earth - ly king - dom; it comes from heav'n a - bove.



Let ev - 'ry hill and val - ley a lev - el road ap - pear!
Palm branch - es strew be - fore him! Spread gar - ments! Shout and sing!
Your king, yet ev - 'ry na - tion its trib - ute too may bring.
His rule is peace and free - dom and jus - tice, truth, and love.



Then greet the King of glo - ry, fore - told in sa - cred sto - ry:
God's prom - ise will not fail you! No more shall doubt as - sail you!
All lands will bow be - fore him; their voic - es join your sing - ing:
So let your praise be sound - ing for kind - ness so a - bound - ing:

Refrain



Ho - san - na to the Lord, for he ful - fills God's word!

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.

In our waiting and watching, we come to you in prayer, O God, trusting your promise to renew the church, the nations, and the whole creation.

A brief silence.

God of power and mercy, we praise you for Jesus and his acts of healing and liberation. Lead us to proclaim the good news from generation to generation, that all may place their hope in you. God of grace,

hear our prayer.

When lands are parched and dry, bring rain and snow; where wilderness is barren, sow seeds of life. Fill the lands with trees that grow, plants that flower, and creatures that thrive, as nature proclaims the wonder of your works. God of grace,

hear our prayer.

When there is injustice or corruption among nations and leaders, root it out. Turn their attention to inequity and the cries of the poor. Instill a deeper sense of compassion and care in all who govern. Bless the lands, people, and churches of Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam; grant political stability, relief from disaster, and a flourishing of peace.

God of grace,

hear our prayer.

When bodies weaken and hearts grow fearful, speak your blessing. In uncertain times, remind us of the promise spoken to our ancestors in faith. God of grace,

hear our prayer.

When people are imprisoned or held captive, break the chains and offer release.

Strengthen the work of the church in restorative justice, breaking cycles of poverty, and welcoming the immigrant - especially we pray for Global Refugee and Lutheran Social Services. God of grace,

hear our prayer.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

As we await your coming, we give thanks for the faithful who have lived and died in faith, especially John of the Cross and Katharina von Bora Luther. May their boldness of faith inspire our witness and work. God of grace,

hear our prayer.

Draw near to us, O God, as we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your mercy through Jesus Christ, Emmanuel.

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 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](http://ourCLCapp) (download at clcvalpo.org/app).

OFFERTORY

Comfort, Comfort Now My People

Manz

PRESENTATION OF THE GIFTS

The assembly stands as the gifts are brought forward.

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

P The Lord be with you. **C** And al - so with you.

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

P Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

C 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.")

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

Lord God of pow'r and might, heav-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.

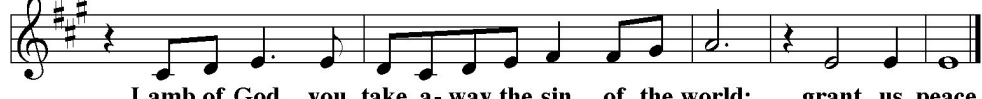
LAMB OF GOD

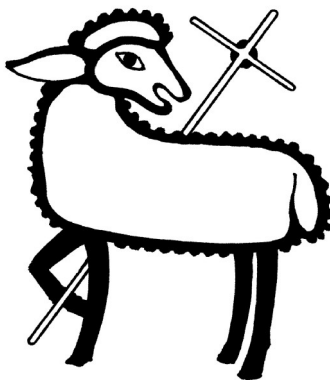

Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the world;


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


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


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


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



COMMUNION MUSIC

ELW #265 *The Angel Gabriel from Heaven Came*



1 The an - gel Ga - bri - el from heav - en came,
2 "For know a bless - ed moth - er thou shalt be,
3 Then gen - tle Mar - y meek - ly bowed her head;
4 Of her, Em-man - u - el, the Christ, was born



with wings as drift - ed snow, with eyes as flame:
all gen - er - a - tions laud and hon - or thee;
"To me be as it pleas - eth God," she said.
in Beth - le - hem all on a Christ - mas morn,



"All hail to thee, O low - ly maid - en Mar - y,
thy son shall be Em - man - u - el, by seers fore - told,
"My soul shall laud and mag - ni - fy God's ho - ly name."
and Chris-tian folk through-out the world will ev - er say:



most high - ly fa - vored la - dy."
most high - ly fa - vored la - dy."
Most high - ly fa - vored la - dy,
"Most high - ly fa - vored la - dy."
Glo - ri - a!

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 and 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.

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 #251 *My Soul Proclaims Your Greatness*



1 My soul pro-claims your great-ness, Lord; I sing my Sav - ior's praise!
2 To all who live in ho - ly fear your mer-cy ev - er flows.
3 To Is - ra - el, your ser - vant blest, your help is ev - er sure;



You looked up - on my low - li - ness, and I am full of grace.
With might - y arm you dash the proud, their schem-ing hearts ex - pose.
the prom - ise to our par - ents made their chil - dren will se - cure.



Now ev - 'ry land and ev - 'ry age this bless-ing shall pro - claim—
The ruth-less you have cast a - side, the low - ly throned in - stead;
Sing glo - ry to the Ho - ly One, give hon - or to the Word,



great won - ders you have done for me, and ho - ly is your name.
the hun - gry filled with all good things, the rich sent off un - fed.
and praise the Pow'r of the Most High, one God, by all a - dored.

Children join the pastors to send us in mission.

DISMISSAL

Children: Go in peace. Keep awake.

Thanks be to God!

POSTLUDE

Prepare the Royal Highway

Manz

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

Worship Leaders

8:00 a.m.

10:30 a.m.

| | | |
|------------------------------|---|----------------------------|
| Acolyte | Reid Venstrom | Caleb Burnside |
| Lector | Dave Nelson | Jenna Abbring |
| Prayer Assistant | Jorunn Scheiderich | Heather Abbring |
| Communion Assistants | Barbara Clements Darla Hernandez | Holly Knauff Amy Knauff |
| Ushers | Gregg Copeland Don MacMillan | Doc Knauff |
| Sound/Light | Sam Venstrom | Tony Reinhold |
| Video/Livestream | _____ | |
| Pastors | Rev. Timothy Knauff, Jr Rev. Erica Gibson-Even | |
| Director of Music Ministries | Brian Bartush | |
| Cantor | Madeline Fry | |
| Worship Participants | Celebration Ringers Handbell Ensemble | |
| Communion Baker | Marilyn McGawn | |

COMMEMORATIONS

Week of December 14, 2025

December 14

John of the Cross, renewer of the church, died 1591

John was a member of the Carmelite monastic order, and worked to reform it. His writings reflect a deep interest in mystical thought and meditation.

December 20

Katharina von Bora Luther, renewer of the church, died 1552

Born to an impoverished nobleman, Katie eventually took vows as a nun, but around age twenty-four she and several other nuns who were influenced by the writings of Martin Luther left the convent. Six children were born to Katie and Martin.

Ecumenical Prayer Cycle

This week we pray for the churches and people of **Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam**

We are **thankful** for:

- those who have remained in these countries through years of conflict and oppression
- Christians who bear witness in the region even though they are small in number
- the many who have provided for humanitarian assistance and peace-building
- refugees from these countries who are enriching the societies in which they now have made their home.

We **pray** for:

- those who continue to bear physical and emotional scars from years of conflict
- victims of monsoons and other disasters in the region
- economic development to improve life for all people and the environment
- political stability amid competing powers.

Keeping Watch

There's nothing quite like the first smell of springtime flowers emerging from the earth. The sensory explosion often catches us by surprise, reminding us that new life is surely coming soon, even though the world still seems to be slumbering and the buds we watch impatiently refuse to open. This third Sunday of Advent lifts the church and stirs our senses as we receive word, along with John the Baptizer, that Jesus is indeed the one we've been waiting for, the one who will turn buds into blooms. This is good news!

We might wonder, however, why we are hearing this news from John's perspective, out of all the voices in the growing community of Jesus-followers. Can we trust his word? After all, John is sitting behind bars at this time, caught in the gears of the world's injustice. John's unjust imprisonment reminds us that working for justice in the world can cause conflict with those in power. But while the world imprisons the innocent and strains to protect the corrupt and cruel, God sees such injustices and works to undo their power. This, too, is good news!

This third Sunday of Advent is sometimes called *Gaudete*, meaning "Rejoice." Cultivating joy amid the brokenness seen in the world is difficult, but God brings new beginnings where we have known only endings. New tendrils of life are emerging! Something new is coming! Let's share the good news as we wait and keep watch together.



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