

ST. JOHN LUTHERAN CHURCH

Called by Christ to be a sanctuary that welcomes and serves all.

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4th Sunday of Advent



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.

December 21, 2025

10 a.m.

Ministers: Everyone

GATHERING

The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God.

PRELUDE MUSIC: O Come O Come Emmanuel, Arr. Marshall McDonald and Steven Sharp Nelson (piano and flute)

BELL CALL TO WORSHIP

WELCOME/ ANNOUNCEMENTS

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH

Use this blessing when lighting four candles.

A: Praise to you, O God, who lives with us, sharing our flesh and bones.

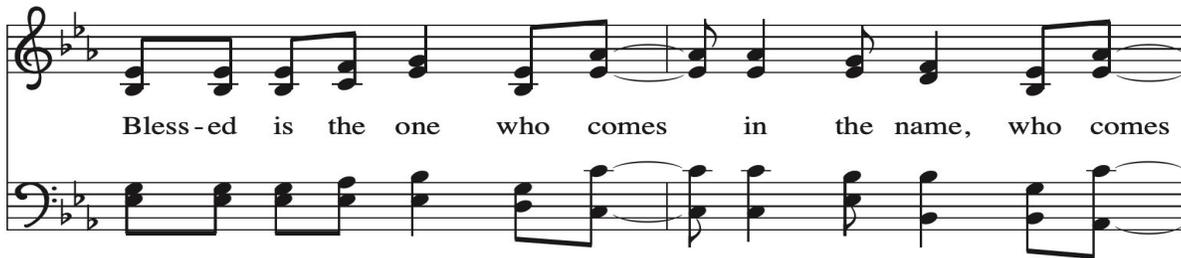
As Mary waited and Joseph dreamed, so we dream and wait for you.

Bless us and let your face shine upon us, more radiant than these candles,
and more dear than all else we seek. Restore us when we fail to refuse
the evil and choose the good, and banish all our fears.

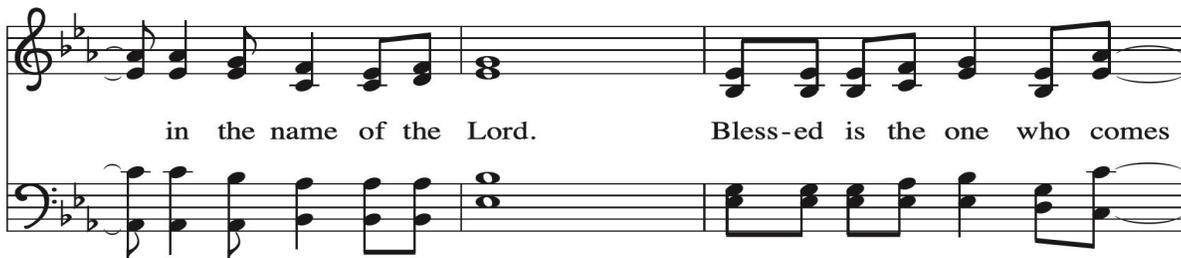
We pray in the name of Emmanuel, your promised child and our Savior.

C: Amen.

ADVENT SONG: Blessed is the One ACS 929



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



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



in the name, who comes in the name of the Lord.

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

All may make the sign of the cross, the sign that is marked at baptism, as the presiding minister begins.

P: Blessed be the holy Trinity, ✝ one God, whose home is heaven and earth,
whose salvation is sure.

Amen.

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God
and of one another.

Silence is kept for reflection.

Long-expected God,

**we confess that we look to ourselves
for the peace and security only you can provide.**

**We reach for swords and spears,
reluctant to release our grip on the ways of war.**

**We become impatient while waiting
and weary of keeping awake.**

**Free us from self-reliance,
and teach us to live in harmony with our neighbors.**

**Increase our trust in God's timing,
and awaken us to your advent among us,
that we may abound in the hope you have promised.**

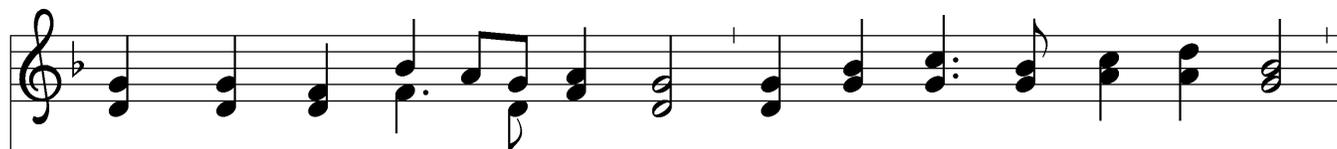
Amen.

God judges us not as we deserve,
but according to God's own righteousness.

✝ You are freed and forgiven,
saved by grace,
and ready to welcome the Savior.

Amen.

GATHERING HYMN: Savior of the Nations Come ELW 263



- 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!

Text: attr. Ambrose of Milan, 340-397; Martin Luther, 1483-1546; tr. hymnal version
Music: NUN KOMM, DER HEIDEN HEILAND, J. Walter, *Geistliche Gesangbüchlein*, 1524
Text © 2006 Augsburg Fortress.

GREETING

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

C: **And also with you.**

PRAYER OF THE DAY

P: Let us pray.....Stir up the wills of all who look to you, Lord God, and strengthen our faith in your coming, that, transformed by grace, we may walk in your way; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

Ms Ashleigh Altemann

WORD

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

FIRST 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."

A: The word of the Lord.

C: **Thanks be to God.**

PSALM: Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19

Let your face shine upon us, and we shall be saved. (Ps. 80:7)

¹ Hear, O Shepherd of Israel, leading Joseph ¹ like a flock;
shine forth, you that are enthroned up- ¹ on the cherubim.

² **In the presence of Ephraim, Benjamin, ¹ and Manasseh,
stir up your strength and ¹ come to help us.**

³ Restore ¹ us, O God;
let your face shine upon us, and we ¹ shall be saved.

⁴ **O LORD ¹ God of hosts,
how long will your anger fume when your ¹ people pray? R**

⁵ You have fed them with the ¹ bread of tears;
you have given them bowls of ¹ tears to drink.

⁶ **You have made us the derision ¹ of our neighbors,
and our enemies laugh ¹ us to scorn.**

⁷ Restore us, O ¹ God of hosts;
let your face shine upon us, and we ¹ shall be saved.

¹⁷ **Let your hand be upon the one at ¹ your right hand,
the one you have made so strong ¹ for yourself.**

¹⁸ And so will we never turn a- ¹ way from you;
give us life, that we may call up- ¹ on your name.

¹⁹ **Restore us, O LORD ¹ God of hosts;
let your face shine upon us, and we ¹ shall be saved. R**

SECOND 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 flesh ⁴ 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.

A: The word of the Lord. **C: Thanks be to God.**

All rise as are able

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

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

GOSPEL: Matthew 1:18-25

P: The holy gospel according to Matthew, the 1st chapter.

C: Glory to you, O Lord.

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."

P: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.

P: The gospel of the Lord. **C: Praise to you, O Christ.**

Please be seated.

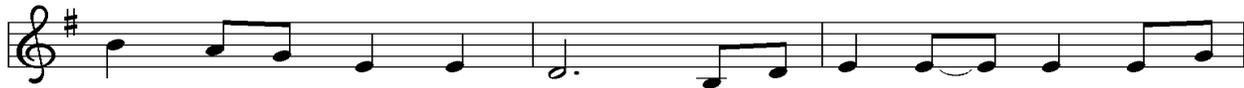
SERMON: ""

Pastor Mark Fisher

HYMN OF THE DAY: Canticle of the Turning ELW 723



1 My soul cries out with a joy - ful shout that the
2 Though I am small, my . . . God, my all, you . . .
3 From the halls of pow'r to the for - tress tow'r, not a
4 Though the na - tions rage from . . age to age, we re -



God of my heart is great, and my spir - it sings of the
work great . . things in me, and your mer - cy will last from the
stone will be left on stone. Let the king be - ware for your
mem - ber who holds us fast: God's mer - cy must de -



won - drous things that you bring to the ones who wait.
depths of the past to the end of the age to be.
jus - tice tears ev - 'ry ty - rant . . . from his throne.
liv - er us from the con - quer - or's crush - ing grasp.



You fixed your sight on your ser - vant's plight, and my
Your ver - y name puts the proud to shame, and to
The hun - gry poor shall . . weep no more, for the
This sav - ing word that our fore - bears heard is the



weak - ness you did not spurn, so from east to west shall my
those who would for you yearn, you will show your might, put the
food they can nev - er earn; there are ta - bles spread, ev - 'ry
prom - ise which holds us bound, till the spear and rod can be



name be blest. Could the world be a - bout to turn?
strong to flight, for the world is a - bout to turn.
mouth be fed, for the world is a - bout to turn.
crushed by God, who is turn - ing the world a - round.



My heart shall sing of the day you bring. Let the fires of your jus - tice burn.



Wipe a - way all tears, for the dawn draws near, and the world is a - bout to turn.

CONFESSION OF FAITH: The Apostles' Creed

**C: 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.**

ST JOHN CHOIR ANTHEM: Cantic of Mary M. Bringle, J. Mueller & M. Joncas

PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISE ACCLAMATIONS

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

P: 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.

A: In the anticipation of these days, prepare our hearts for your arrival. Stir our spirits through the gifts of artists, musicians, poets, and preachers, as together we proclaim your advent among us. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

A: The earth breaks forth in singing as it heralds the Messiah's coming. Fill our hearts with wonder as we join heaven and nature in announcing this holy birth. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

A: You send your saving grace and peace to the nations. Lead us in work for justice and care for the common good. May we meet the Christ-child we seek in the faces of our neighbors. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

A: When tears of grief, exhaustion, or loneliness come, or physical or emotional hurt overwhelms us, come to our aid. Uphold all who are anxious, who know the challenges of depression, or who are ill (*especially*). God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

A: Surround expectant parents and those suffering from infant loss with communities of support. Bless young children and new parents. Guide us in ways that provide safety for all children and those who care for them. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Here other intercessions may be offered.

A: We give thanks for all who have treasured the gospel and lived in faithful service. Strengthen our earthly journeys until, at the last, your face shines upon us and we are held in your love. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

P: 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

P: The peace of Christ be with you always. **And also with you.**

MEAL

God feeds us with the presence of Christ.

OFFERING MUSIC: Inisheer Thomas Walsh (concertina and piano)

OFFERING PRAYER

P: Nourishing God,

you are water in the wilderness and streams in the desert.

Through this meal, satisfy our parched places,

that we may rejoice and be for the world

signs of your kingdom come.

C: Amen.

GREAT THANKSGIVING

P: The Lord be with you. C: **And also 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.

P: It is indeed right, our duty and our joy, that we should at all times and in all places

give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God, through our Savior Jesus Christ.

You comforted your people with the promise of the Redeemer, through whom you will also make all things new in the day when he comes to judge the world in righteousness.

And so, with all the choirs of angels, with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven,

we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

☩ Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow - er and
might, heav - en and earth are full of your glo - ry.
Ho - san - na in the high - est. Bless - ed is he who
comes in the name of the Lord. Ho - san - na in the
high - est. Ho - san - na in the high - est.

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

THE LORD'S PRAYER

P: Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us.

C: Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come,
thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, and the power,
and the glory, forever and ever. Amen

P: Here is life. God is with us.

Come, receive what God has promised.

Pastor/Presider extends invitation to online participants to partake of communion
The body of Christ, given for you. The blood of Christ shed for you. Amen

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.

COMMUNION MUSIC: Gift of God M. Haugen (choir, piano, Jean Marie Learman, cantor)

BLESSING AFTER COMMUNION

P: The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen and keep you in his grace.
Amen.

SENDING

God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world.

CLOSING PRAYER

A: God our host,
at this table you have fed us with joy and gladness.
Send us forth, eager to share the feast,
welcome the stranger,
and bear good fruit in the name of Jesus.
Amen.

RINGING OF THE BELL

BLESSING:

P: The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face
shine on you and be gracious to you;
the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace.

C: Amen

SENDING HYMN: People, Look East ELW 248

DISMISSAL

A: We are called by Christ

C: to be a Sanctuary that Welcomes and Serves All.

A: Go in peace. Keep awake.

C: Thanks be to God.

POSTLUDE: Make Room Matt Hall and Mark Maher (vocals and guitar)

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: BESANÇON, French carol; arr. Barry Rose, b. 1934

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