



THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

DECEMBER 15, 2024

Whenever you see an asterisk (*), you are invited to stand as you are able. You are invited to speak sans serif **Bolded type** with the congregation.

INTRODUCTION TO THE DAY

Christ's presence in our midst in the wonder of the holy supper is cause for singing. The nearness of the God in prayer, in every circumstance, is cause for rejoicing. The coming of one "more powerful" than John, even with a winnowing fork in hand, is good news—and cause for exultation—for us who are being saved. Great joy is the tone for the third Sunday of Advent.

PRELUDE: "Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming"

(Victor Labenske)

GATHERING

*CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

P: Blessed be the holy Trinity, + one God, alive in the world, reviving creation, arriving soon. **A: Amen.**

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

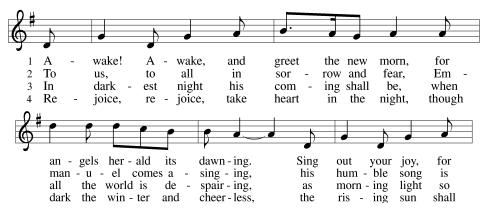
P: God of mercy, we confess that we have sinned. We trust earthly powers and human authority alone. We grow fearful. We cling to false comforts.

P: God of might, we confess that we have sinned. We have turned away from our neighbors. We have trusted false promises.

P: God in our midst, we confess that we have sinned. We plead: come to us. Bring your mercy to birth in us.

P: In the mercy of almighty God, Jesus Christ was given to die for us and for his sake God forgives us all our sins. As a called and ordained minister of the church of Christ, and by his authority, I therefore declare to you the entire forgiveness of all your sins, in the name of the Father, and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **A: Amen.**

*GATHERING HYMN "Awake! Awake, and Greet the New Morn" (ELW 242)





Text: Marty Haugen, b. 1950

Music: REJOICE, REJOICE, Marty Haugen
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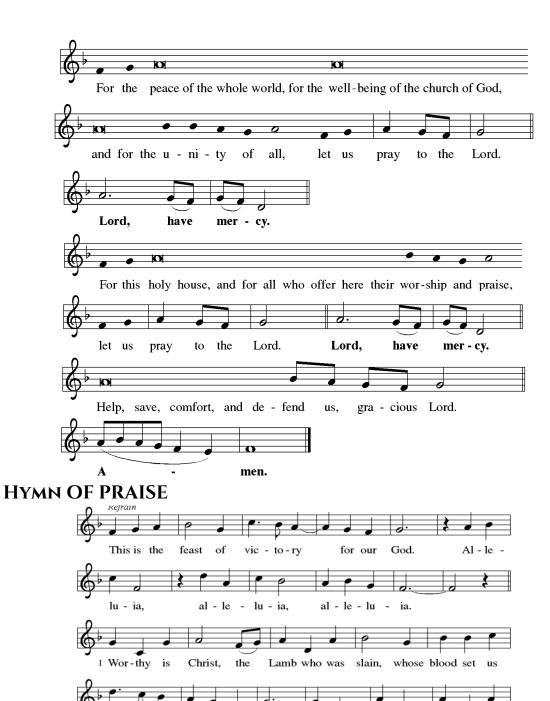
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*GREETING

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

KYRIE





Pow-er,

rich-es,

wis-dom, and

God.

free to be peo-ple of



*PRAYER OF THE DAY

P: The Lord be with you. A: And also, with you.

P: Let us pray. Stir up the wills of your faithful people, Lord God, and open our ears to the preaching of John, that, rejoicing in your salvation, we may bring forth the fruits of repentance; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **A: Amen.**

*LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH (Christ be our Light, verse 3)



Text: Bernadette Farrell, b. 1957
Music: CHRIST, BE OUR LIGHT, Bernadette Farrell
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P: Praise to you, O God, who holds our joy and sorrow. You bring water to parched ground and life out of death. Bless us as this light grows, and send sorrow and sighing to flee away. Give us strength and patience, trusting that you are true to your promises. Transform the lives of all who suffer with your wonders near at hand.. **A: Amen.**

WORD

FIRST READING: ZEPHANIAH 3:14-20

The book of Zephaniah was written as King Josiah of Judah was beginning his reform of the nation's life and faith. While much of the book warns of God's wrath against injustice and idolatry, it ends with this song of promise and joy

¹⁴ Sing aloud, O daughter Zion; shout, O Israel! Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O daughter Jerusalem!

¹⁵ The LORD has taken away the judgments against you; he has turned away your enemies. The king of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst; you shall fear disaster no more.

 16 On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem: "Do not fear, O Zion; do not let your hands grow weak.

¹⁷ The LORD, your God, is in your midst, a warrior who gives victory; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will renew you in his love; he will exult over you with loud singing

¹⁸ as on a day of festival." I will remove disaster from you, so that you will not bear reproach for it.

¹⁹ I will deal with all your oppressors at that time. And I will save the lame and gather the outcast, and I will change their shame into praise and renown in all the earth.

²⁰ At that time I will bring you home, at the time when I gather you; for I will make you renowned and praised among all the peoples of the earth, when I restore your fortunes before your eyes, says the LORD.

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

"The choir will be singing the verses to the psalm. Please join in on the refrain when indicated by Morgen."

PSALM: ISAIAH 12:2-6

While the response to the first reading is almost always a psalm, occasionally another song from Scripture appears here. Today, this song from Isaiah continues Zephaniah's song of joy at universal redemption.







VERSE

Therefore you shall draw water with rejoicing from the springs of salvation.

And on that day you shall say, give thanks to the Lord, and call upon His name.

REFRAIN

VERSE

Make His deeds known among the peoples.

See that they remember that His name is exalted.

Sing the praises of the Lord, for He has done great things, and this is known in all the world.

REFRAIN

VERSE

Cry aloud, inhabitants of Zion.
Ring out your joy,
for the great one in the midst of you
is the Holy One of Israel.

REFRAIN (sung twice)

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SECOND READING: PHILIPPIANS 4:4-7

Because his relationship with the church at Philippi was so close and loving, this is the most joyful of Paul's letters – surprisingly, because it is written from prison. Appropriately for this season, in this passage Paul describes how we should live "in the meantime" between the Incarnation and the Final Day.

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. ⁵ Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. ⁶ Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be

made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

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

*GOSPEL ACCLAMATION



*GOSPEL READING: LUKE 3:7-18

The Gospel reading for the Third Sunday of Advent always focusses on the preaching of John the Baptist. Luke describes that teaching in greater detail than the other Gospel writers, including his call to his audience to live out their repentance in their occupations.

P: The Holy Gospel according to Saint Luke, the third chapter. **A: Glory to you, O Lord.**

⁷ John said to the crowds coming out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? ⁸ Therefore, bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our ancestor,' for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. ⁹ Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire "

¹⁰ And the crowds asked him, "What, then, should we do?" ¹¹ In reply he said to them, "Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none, and whoever has food must do likewise." ¹² Even tax collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, "Teacher, what should we do?" ¹³ He said to them, "Collect no more than the amount prescribed for

you." ¹⁴ Soldiers also asked him, "And we, what should we do?" He said to them, "Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages."

¹⁵ As the people were filled with expectation and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, ¹⁶ John answered all of them by saying, "I baptize you with water, but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the strap of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹⁷ His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."

¹⁸ So with many other exhortations he proclaimed the good news to the people.

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

SERMON

HYMN OF THE DAY: "Now the Heavens Start to Whisper"

(ACS 901)



- 1 Now the heav ens start to whis per, as the veil is grow-ing thin.
- 2 Heav y clouds that block the moon-light now be gin to drift a way. 3 Christ, e - ter - nal Sun of jus - tice, Christ, the rose of wis-dom's seed,

Earth from slum - ber wakes to lis - ten to the stir - ring, faint with-in: Dia - mond bril-liance through the dark - ness shines the hope of com-ing day. come to bless with fire and fra-grance hours of yearn-ing, hurt, and need.



seed of prom-ise, deep-ly plant-ed, child to spring from Jes - se's stem! Christ, the morn-ing star of splen-dor, gleams with-in a world grown dim. In the lone-ly, in the strang-er, in the out-cast, hid from view;



Like the soil be - neath the frost-line, hearts grow soft to wel-come him. Heav-en's em - ber fans to full-ness; hearts grow warm to wel-come him. Child who comes to grace the man-ger, teach our hearts to wel-come you.

Text: Mary Louise Bringle, b. 1953 Music: SUO GÂN, Welsh melody

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*INVITATION TO BAPTISM

*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 OF INTERCESSION

L: As we prepare for Emmanuel, God-with-us, let us pray for all people and places that long for God's presence.

A brief silence.

L: God who reforms, fill your church with courage to do your will. Empower your people in taking risks that bear fruit. Raise up leaders who will proclaim the good news. Lord, in your mercy,

A: receive our prayer.

L: God who creates, you hold in balance diverse ecosystems. Encourage efforts to protect wild lands from devastation. Care for animals and people in the path of destructive fires, storms, and other disasters (*especially*). Lord, in your mercy,

A: receive our prayer.

L: God who leads, this world cries out for true justice. Guide legislatures, judges, and lawyers in actions steeped in love and restoration. Increase the desire to advocate for all who are confronted with discrimination and oppression based on race, gender, sexuality, class, or age. Lord, in your mercy,

A: receive our prayer.

L: God who embraces, help us notice the places where your people are hurting or sick. (*We pray especially for* . . .) Show your compassion and remember your people in love. Lord, in your mercy,

A: receive our prayer.

L: God who abides, you dwell among the people of this congregation. Deepen our relationships with one another, and make us aware of the diverse talents and gifts present here (*specific ministries may be named*). Lord, in your mercy,

A: receive our prayer.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

L: God who consoles, we thank you for the time we have had with loved ones who have died, especially Nancy McMullen. Comfort us with the promise of everlasting life in you. Lord, in your mercy,

A: receive our prayer.

L: Savior of the nations, come, and receive these prayers and the pleas of our hearts, in the name of Jesus Christ.

A: Amen.

*PEACE

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

MEAL

OFFERING

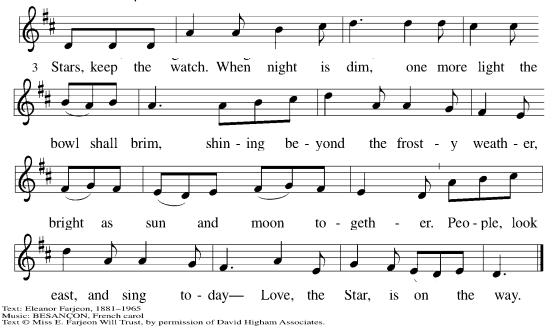


Offerings can be made online at **stpaulpgm.org/give**, mailed to St. Paul Lutheran Church, PO Box 200, Pine Grove Mills, PA 16868, placed in the mail slot (outside door to Pastor Paul's office), or in the offering plate located in the lobby/narthex near the entrance of the sanctuary.

MUSICAL OFFERING: "Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus" (Rowland Hugh Prichard)

OFFERTORY: "People, Look East" vs. 3

(ELW 248)



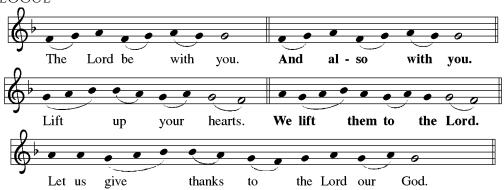
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*OFFERING PRAYER

L: Let us pray: Creator God, you made the whole world, even the farthest stars, and you draw near to feed us. We praise you for these gifts of bread and wine. Strengthen us with this food that we may live in expectation for the advent of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. A: Amen.

*THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

* DIALOGUE

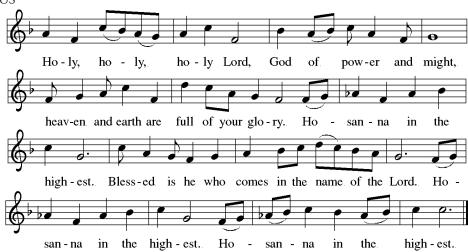




*PREFACE

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 comfort 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:

*Sanctus



*THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE

P: Holy God, the Beginning and the End, our Salvation and our Hope, we praise you for creating a world of order and beauty.

When we brought on chaos, cruelty and despair, you sent the prophets to proclaim your justice and mercy.

At this end of the ages your Son Jesus came to bring us your love and to heal all the suffering world.

In the night in which he was handed over, our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks; broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: Take and eat; this is my body, given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying:

This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin.

Do this for the remembrance of me.

Until his glorious Advent, we proclaim the mystery of our faith:

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

Remembering, therefore, his life, death, and resurrection, we await his coming again in righteousness and peace.

A: Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

Send your Spirit on us and on this bread and wine we share: strengthen our faith, increase our hope, and bring to birth the justice and joy of your Son.

A: Amen. Come, Holy Spirit.

Through him all glory and honor is yours, Almighty Father, with the Holy Spirit, in your holy Church, both now and forever. **A: Amen**

*LORD'S PRAYER

P: Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray:

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;

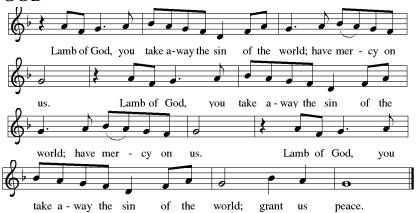
and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

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

*INVITATION TO COMMUNION

P: God feeds us with tender mercy. Come to the table.

*LAMB OF GOD



A NOTE ON COMMUNION WAFERS



To topple barriers that prevent participation in worship, we want to make it possible for individuals with Celiac Disease or gluten intolerant to be able to eat the Body of our Lord. Our default wafers are made by Parish Crossroads and are known as "Low Gluten Wafers" because they contain trace amounts of gluten. However, the wafers are tested at least once a year for how much gluten is in them. Since 2020, the wafers have routinely tested to contain 15ppm gluten or less (The

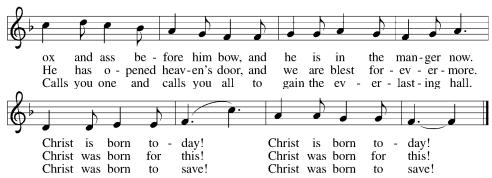
US FDA defines most food products with 20ppm or less as "gluten free"). Use the QR Code and look for the link that gives the most recent test results.

If you still have concerns, we have some truly gluten-free wafers available upon request.

COMMUNION

L: The body of Christ, given for you. The blood of Christ, shed for you. A: Amen.

COMMUNION HYMN: "Good Christian Friends, Rejoice" (ELW 288) 1 Good Chris-tian friends, re - joice with heart and soul and voice: 2 Good Chris-tian friends, re - joice with heart and soul and voice; 3 Good Chris-tian friends, re - joice with heart and soul and voice: Je - sus Christ give ye heed to what we say: is born to - day; now ye hear end - less bliss: Je - sus Christ born for this! was now ye need not fear the grave; Je - sus Christ was born to save!

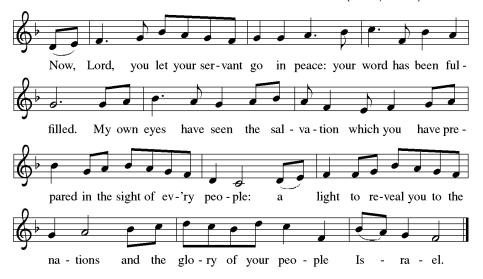


Text: Medieval Latin carol; tr. John Mason Neale, 1818–1866 Music: IN DULCI JUBILO, German carol, 14th cent.

*POST-COMMUNION BLESSING

L: The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in grace. **A: Amen.**

*POST-COMMUNION CANTICLE - Nunc Dimittis (Now, Lord)



*POST-COMMUNION PRAYER

L: Let us pray. Generous God, we thank you for the gift of life, for the bread of salvation. We thank you for coming among us, for leading us into peace. We thank you for showering us with mercy, for sending us into the world. Come, Lord Jesus, and go with us as we feed the hungry in your name. **A: Amen.**

SENDING

*SENDING OF COMMUNION

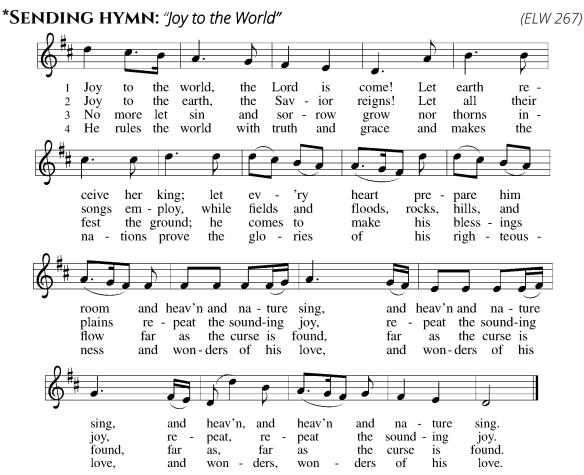
ANNOUNCEMENTS

You may be seated.

*CHARGE TO THE PEOPLE

*BLESSING

P: The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord's face shine on you with grace and mercy. The Lord look upon you with favor and give you peace. In the name of the Father, and the Son, 4 and the Holy Spirit. **A: Amen.**



Text: Isaac Watts, 1674-1748

Music: ANTIOCH, English melody, 18th cent.; arr. Lowell Mason, 1792-1872

*DISMISSAL

P: Go in peace. Prepare the way for Emmanuel.

A: Thanks be to God.

POSTLUDE: "For Unto Us" (Jeff Bennett)



SERVING TODAY

Worship Leader	Pastor Paul Tomkiel
Assisting Minister	Joy Kling
Musician	Michelle McMullen
Sacristan	Delorse Homan
Reader	Linda Govere

ABOUT ST. PAUL

PURPOSE

We are a beacon, boldly sharing the light of Jesus' grace and love.

MISSION

Guided by Jesus, we strengthen faith, deepen compassion, extend generosity, and serve community.

CORE VALUES

Faith • Compassion • Generosity • Community

OUR BIBLE VERSES

As Paul was going along and approaching Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. [Jesus said,] 'Paul is an instrument whom I have chosen to bring my name before the nations.'– Acts 9:3,15

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

St. Paul is located on the original and ancestral homelands of the Susquehannock people, where we gather for worship this morning. We also acknowledge the Seneca, Cayuga, Lenne Lenape, as well as all of our Indigenous siblings who have and continue to care for this place – this land – and call it their home.

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