ST PAUL
PINE GROVE MILLS
A congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Third Sunday of Advent

December 14, 2025

Welcome to Saint Paul!

We are happy to have you here!

How to know when to stand, sit, or speak

Whenever you see an asterisk (*) at a heading, you are invited to stand as you are able. You are not required to stand, so if, for health or emotional reasons you cannot or do not wish to stand, that is okay.
You are invited to speak the words printed in **bold type**.

How to sing hymns in harmony

To save space in printing the bulletin, we usually limit what is printed to the melody. If you'd like to sing in harmony, the hymn numbers are listed in our bulletin so you can open the red books in the pews (called ELWs).

We are an Open Communion Congregation

This means that any Christian who has received the Sacrament of Holy Baptism is invited to receive Holy Communion.

How to financially support us

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.

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.

Gathering

The Gathering for worship began when you started readying yourself for worship

An Introduction to the day

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.

Prelude – *Out of consideration for our musicians, please refrain from talking during the prelude.*

*Confession and forgiveness

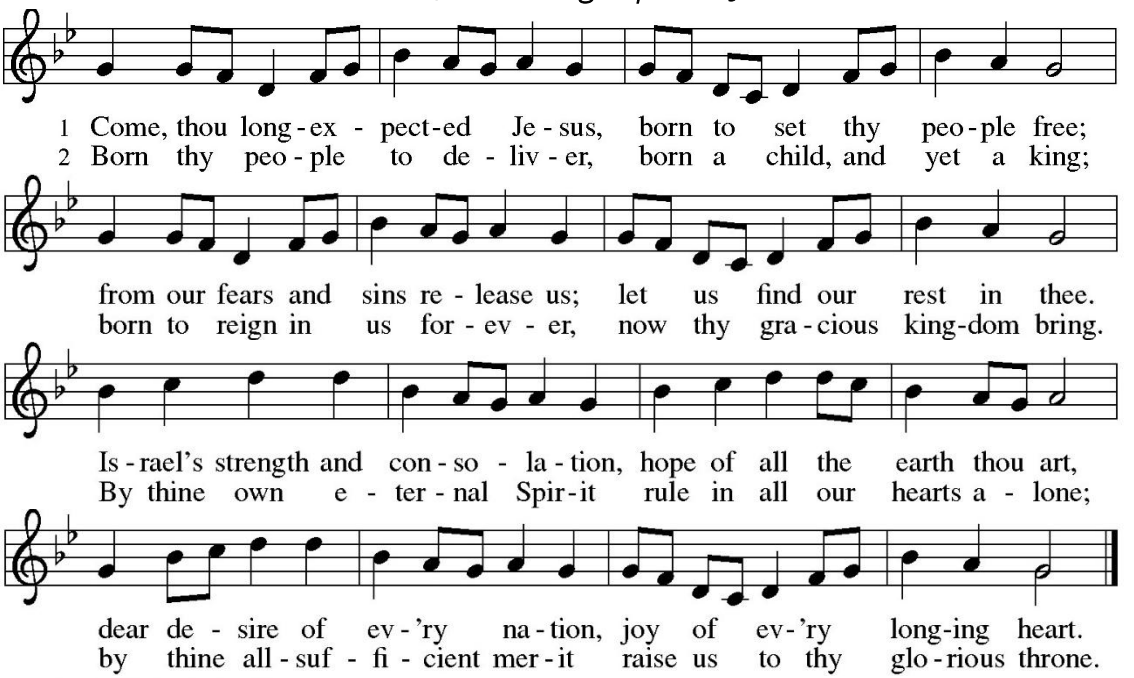
P: In the name of the Father, and of the ☩Son, and of the Holy Spirit. A: Amen.

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

P Long-expected God, A**: 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.**

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 *"Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus"* (ELW 254)

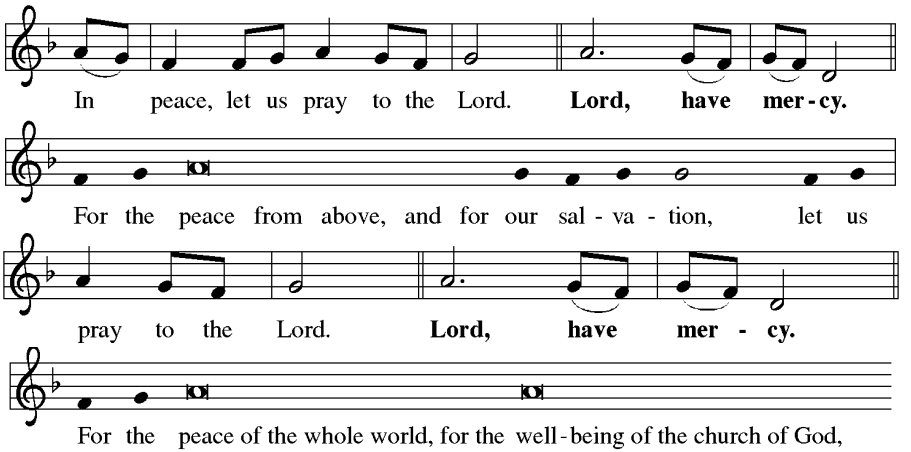


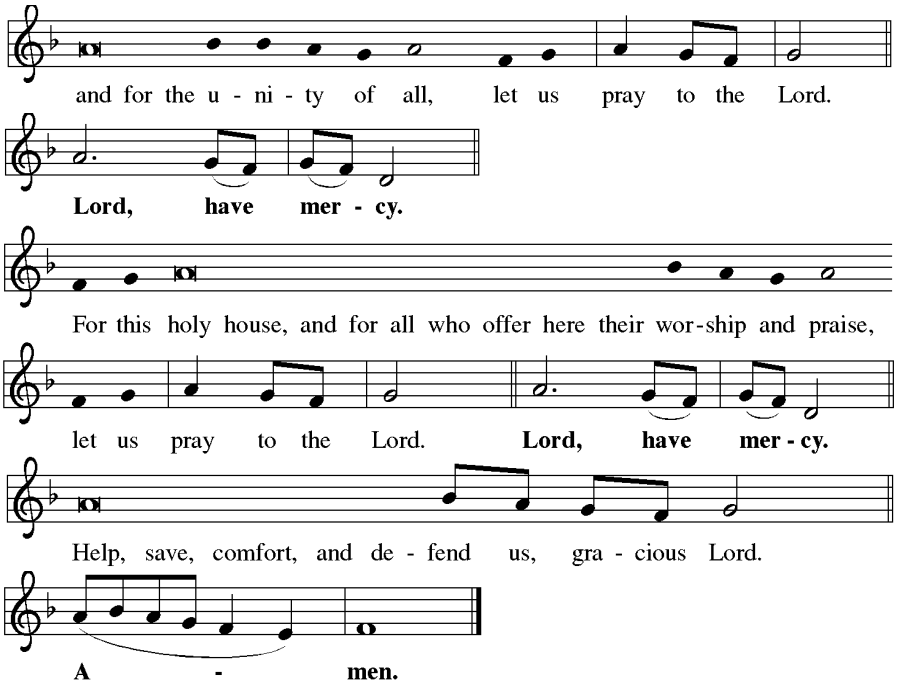
Text: Charles Wesley, 1707-1788
Music: JEFFERSON, W. Walker, *Southern Harmony*, 1835

*GREETING

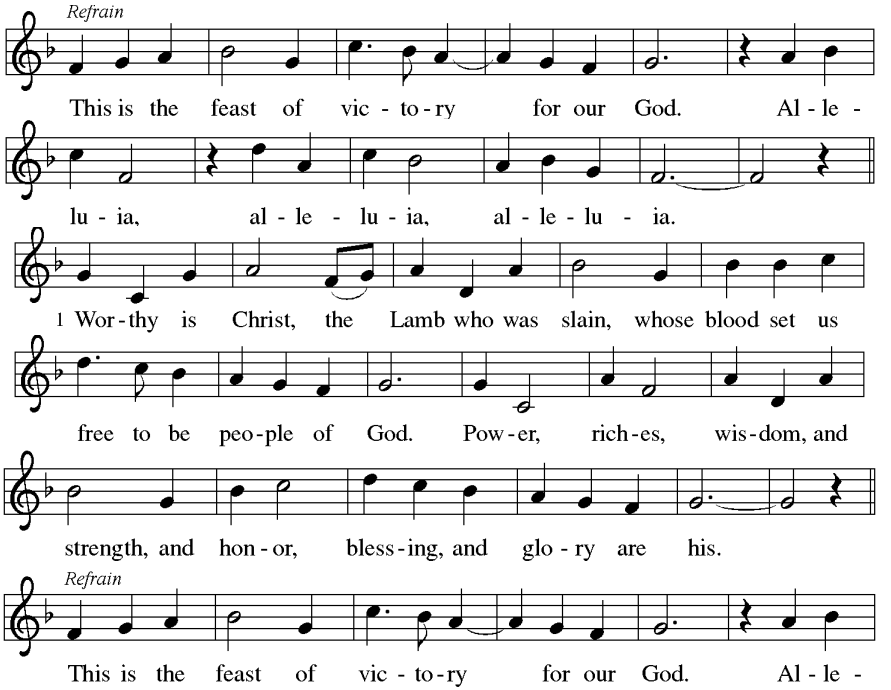
P: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. **A: And also with you.**

KYRIE





HYMN OF PRAISE



*Prayer of the Day

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

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. **A: Amen.**

Word

First Reading: Isaiah 35:1-10

Isaiah saw that God would use Assyria to punish Israel for its unfaithfulness, conquering it and ending the Davidic dynasty ("the tree of Jesse"). But he promised that God would save a remnant of the nation and re-establish the dynasty, in a time of almost unbelievable peace, prosperity, and security.

[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.

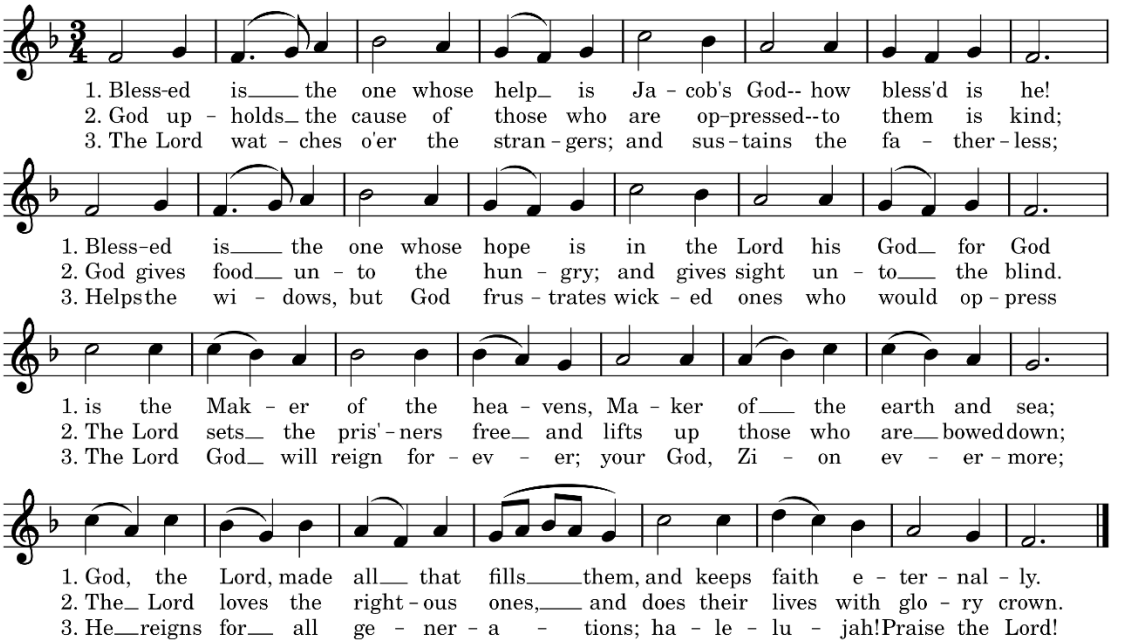
8 A highway shall be there,
and it shall be called the Holy Way;
the unclean shall not travel on it, but it shall be for God's people;
no traveler, not even fools, shall go astray.
9 No lion shall be there, nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it;
they shall not be found there, but the redeemed shall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

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

PSALM: 146: 5-10

(sung to the tune Hyfrydol (ELW 392))

Luke's nativity story is filled with songs, including this one, sung by Mary when her cousin Elizabeth greets her as the mother of the Savior. For over a thousand years, it has been one of the readings for the Third Sunday of Advent, and was sung as part of daily Evening Prayer.



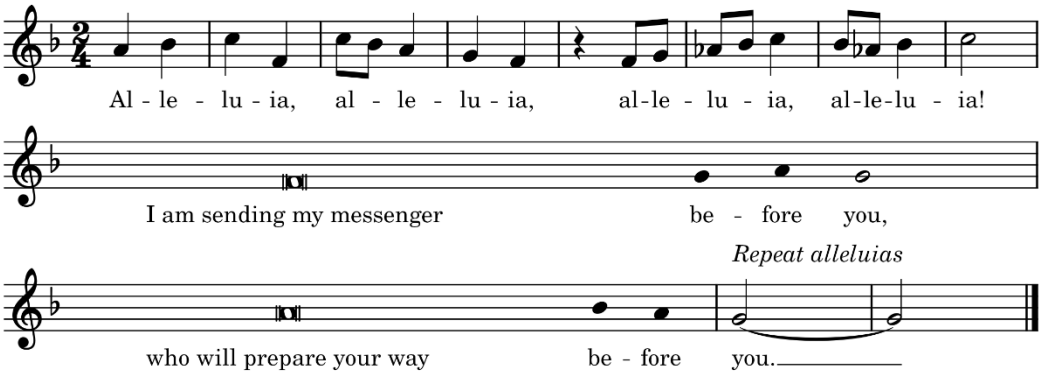
Second Reading: James 5:7-10

In the verses before this reading, the author has urged his readers to be generous and peaceful, and warned those who take advantage of the poor that justice is coming.

7 Be patient, therefore, brothers and sisters, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer
waits for the precious crop from the earth, being patient with it until it receives the early
and the late rains. 8 You also must be patient. Strengthen your hearts, for the coming of
the Lord is near. 9 Brothers and sisters, do not grumble against one another, so that you
may not be judged. See, the Judge is standing at the doors! 10 As an example of suffering
and patience, brothers and sisters, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the
Lord.

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

*Gospel Acclamation



*Gospel Reading: Matthew 11:2-11

John the Baptist expected a successor to come who would be even harsher than he was, and recognized Jesus as that successor. But in his ministry after John had been arrested, Jesus instead offered comfort and healing.

P: The Holy Gospel according to Saint Matthew, the eleventh chapter.
A: 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,

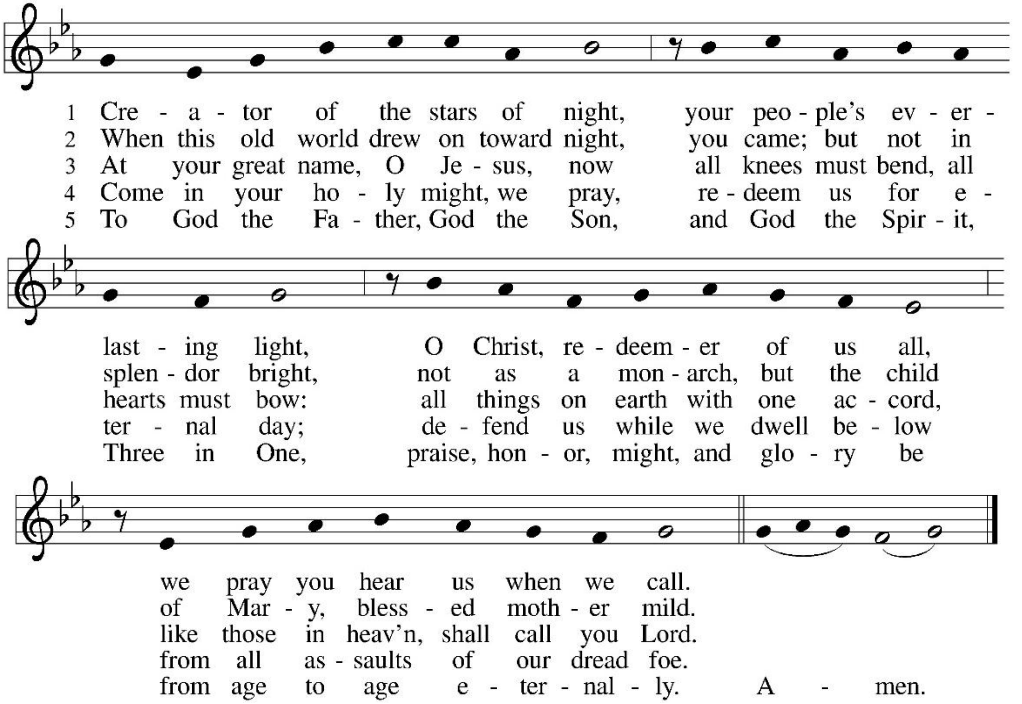
'See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way before you.'

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."

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

Sermon

*Hymn of the Day *"Creator of the Stars of Night"* *(ELW 245)*



Text: Latin hymn, 9th cent.; tr. *Hymnal* 1940, alt.
Music: CONDITOR ALME SIDERUM, plainsong mode IV
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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.

*Or, "who proceeds from the Father." The phrase "and the Son" is a later addition to the creed.

*Prayers of Intercession

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.

L: 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,
A: hear our prayer.

L: 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,
A: hear our prayer.
L: 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. God of grace,
A: hear our prayer.

L: When bodies weaken and hearts grow fearful, speak your blessing. (*We pray especially for . . .*) In uncertain times, remind us of the promise spoken to our ancestors in faith. God of grace,
A: hear our prayer.

L: 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 Refuge and Lutheran Social Services*). God of grace,
A: hear our prayer.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

L: As we await your coming, we give thanks for the faithful who have lived and died in faith (*especially Mary, mother of Jesus, John of the Cross and . . .*). May their boldness of faith inspire our witness and work. God of grace,
A: hear our prayer.

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

*Peace

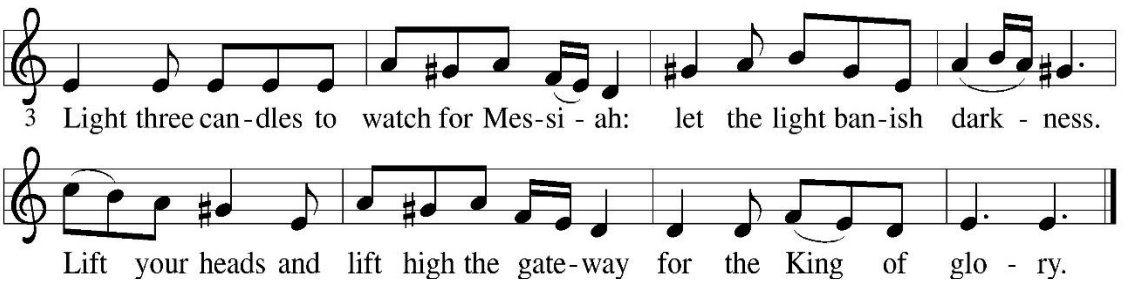
P: The peace of Christ be with you always. **A: And also with you.**

Meal

Offering

Musical Offering

***Offertory:** *"Light One Candle to Watch for Messiah vs.3"* *(ELW 240)*



Text: Wayne L. Wold, b. 1954
Music: TIF IN VELDELE, Yiddish folk tune
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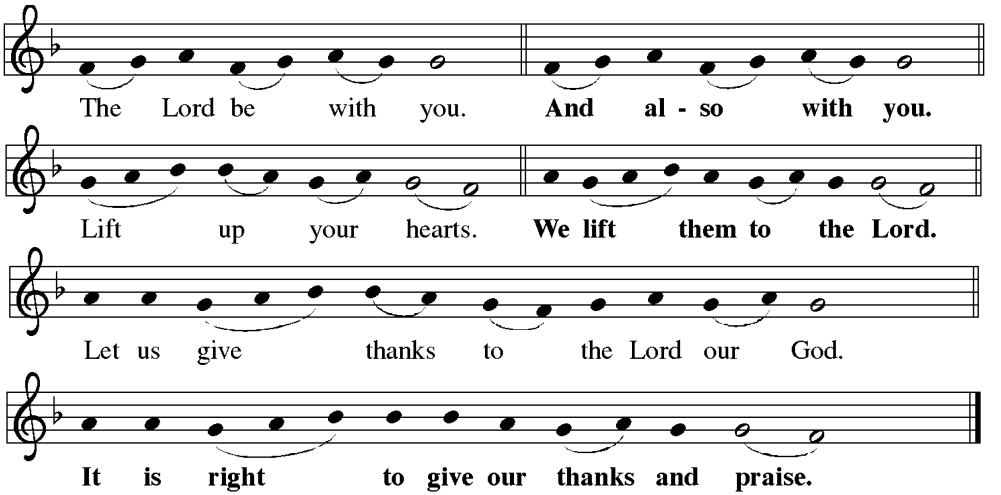
*Offering Prayer

L: Let us pray: 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. **A: Amen.**

*THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

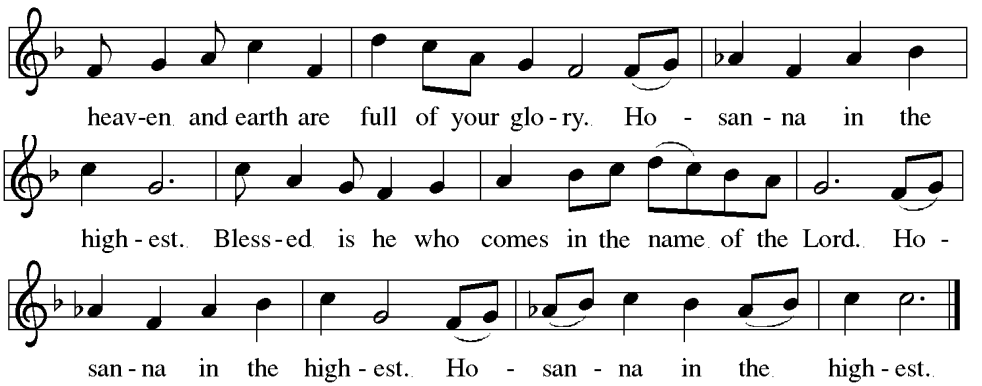
* DIALOGUE



*PROPER 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 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:

*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.

Together we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.
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:

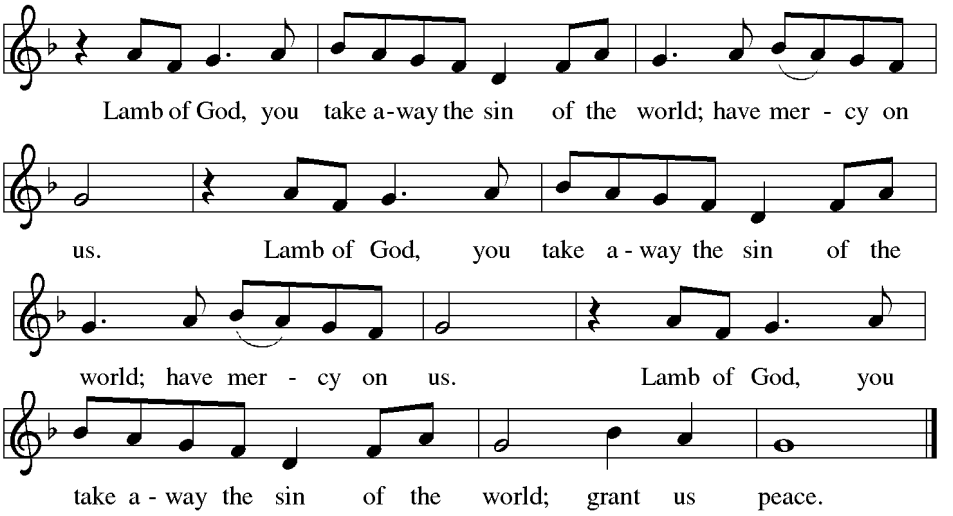
Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those
who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
forever and ever. Amen.

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.
Lead us not into time of trial,
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
forever and ever. Amen.

*INVITATION TO COMMUNION

P: Here is life. God is with us. Come, receive what God has promised.

*Lamb of God



Communion

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

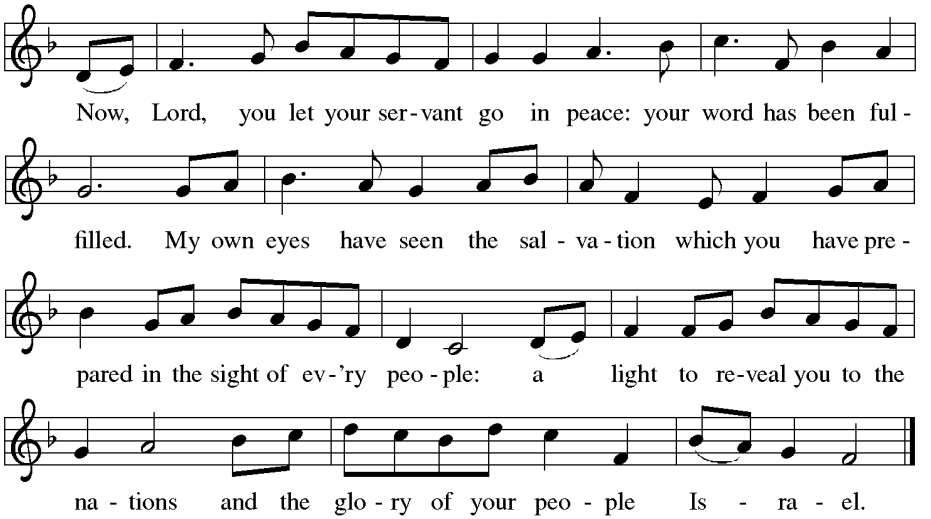
Communion Hymn: *"Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming"* *(ELW 272)*

Text: German carol, 15th cent.; tr. Theodore Baker, 1851–1934, sts. 1–2; Harriet R. Krauth, 1845–1925, st. 3; John C. Mattes, 1876–1948, st. 4
Music: ES IST EIN ROS, *Alte catholische geistliche Kirchengesänge*, Köln, 1599

*Post-Communion Blessing

P: The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen and preserve you, body, mind, and soul, now, and unto eternal life**. A: Amen**

*Post-Communion Canticle – *Nunc Dimittis* (*Now, Lord)*



*Post-Communion Prayer

L: Let us pray. 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. **A: Amen.**

Sending

*Sending of communion

The Pastor prays a prayer for members to bring communion to fellow Christian siblings who could not attend worship this morning.

Announcements

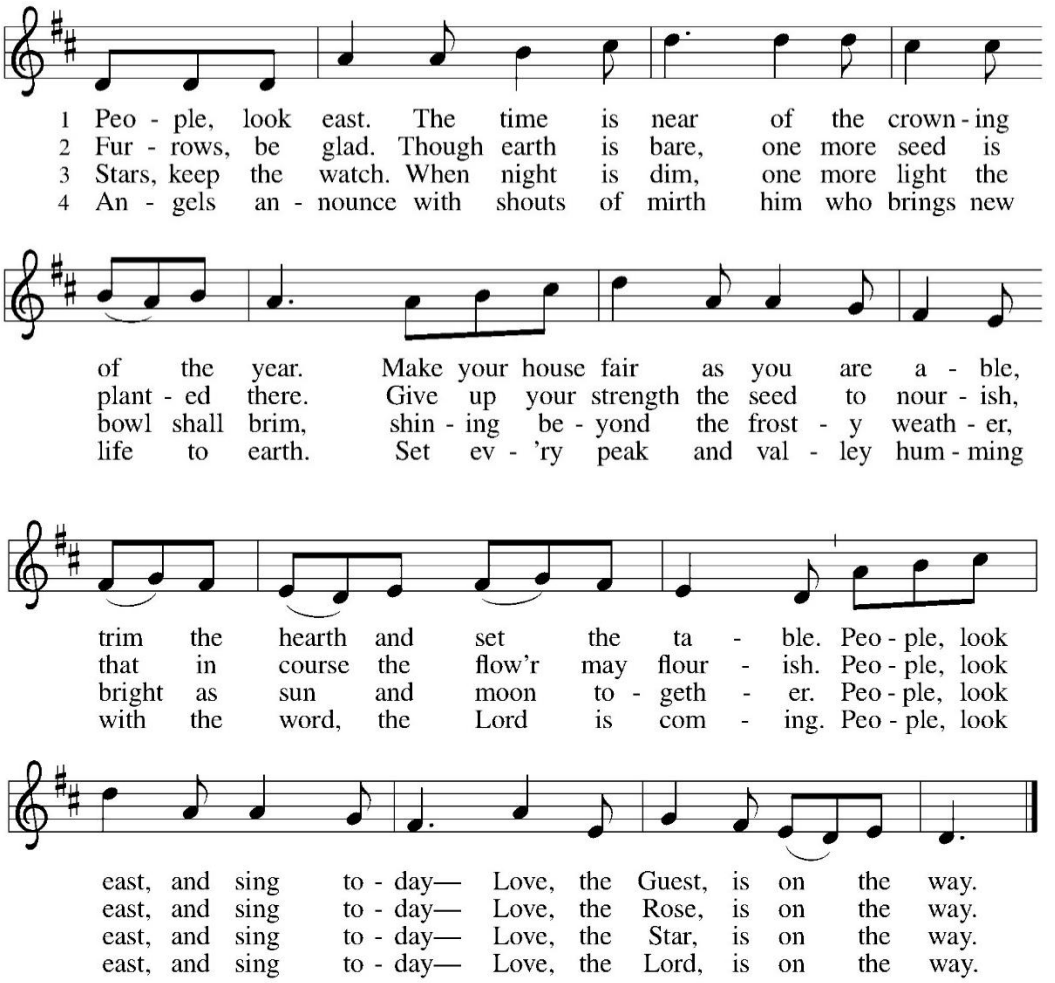
You may be seated.

*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, ✢ and the Holy Spirit. **A: Amen.**

*Sending Hymn: *"People, Look East"* *(ELW 248)*



*Dismissal

L: Go in peace. Keep awake.
A: Thanks be to God.

Postlude

Daily Readings for the week

Sunday, December 14
Isaiah 35:1-10
Psalm 146:5-10 (8) or
Luke 1:46b-55 (47)
James 5:7-10
Matthew 11:2-11

Monday, December 15
Isaiah 29:17-24
Acts 5:12-16
Psalm 42

Tuesday, December 16
Ezekiel 47:1-12
Jude 17-25
Psalm 42

Wednesday, December 17
Zechariah 8:1-17
Matthew 8:14-17, 28-34
Psalm 42

Thursday, December 18
2 Samuel 7:1-17
Galatians 3:23-29
Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19

Friday, December 19
2 Samuel 7:18-22
Galatians 4:1-7
Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19

Saturday, December 20
2 Samuel 7:23-29
John 3:31-36
Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19

ST PAUL
PINE GROVE MILLS
A congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Serving Today

Presiding Minister..... Pastor Paul Tomkiel
Assisting Minister..... Morgen Hummel
Musician..... Jacob Heller
Sacristan..... Delorse Homan
Reader..... Nate Clinert

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 Conestoga-Susquehannock people, where we gather. 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.
Find out more about the Conestoga-Susquehannock at www.conestogasusquehannocktribe.com

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