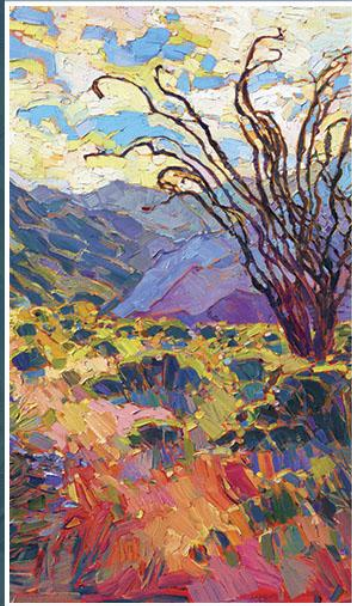


Order of Worship
Third Sunday of Advent
December 14, 2025

The
desert shall
rejoice
and
blossom

ISAIAH 35:1



Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church
745 S. Ingraham Avenue
Lakeland, FL 33801
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The Rev. Dr. Olga-Maria Cruz, Pastor
Email: pastor@gracelakeland.com
www.gracelakeland.com

3rd Sunday of Advent. 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.

*=ALL STAND for this part of worship

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

LIGHTING THE ADVENT WREATH

The prophet Isaiah shared a word with the grieving world, a vision of vibrant renewal. All of creation will be glad. Even the earth itself will praise God!

Dry places like deserts will be full of blooming life.

Joy will grow like new crocuses poking up through the ground and spreading out in the front yard.

The whole earth will sing praises to God, and so will we!

As we wait faithfully for God's time, we light the candles of Hope, Peace, and Joy.

In God's time of joy, all sorrow and sighing will leave us.



- 1 Light one can-dle to watch for Mes-si - ah: let the light ban-ish dark - ness.
- 2 Light two can-dles to watch for Mes-si - ah: let the light ban-ish dark - ness.
- 3 Light three can-dles to watch for Mes-si - ah: let the light ban-ish dark - ness.
- 4 Light four can-dles to watch for Mes-si - ah: let the light ban-ish dark - ness.



He shall bring sal - va - tion to Is - ra - el, God ful - fills the prom - ise.
He shall feed the flock like a shep-herd, gent - ly lead them home-ward.
Lift your heads and lift high the gate-way for the King of glo - ry.
He is com - ing, tell the glad tid - ings. Let your lights be shin - ing!

Blessed are you, God of Creation, for you promise to make the desert rejoice and blossom, to watch over the strangers, and to set the prisoners free.

As we light these candles, satisfy us with your good gifts, open our eyes to the great things you have done for us, and fill us with patience until the coming of our Lord, Jesus the Christ.

O people of joy, come.

Let us travel on God's holy way and enter into Zion with singing. Amen.

PRELUDE

Dona Nobis Pacem

ELW 753

***CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS**

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

Blessed be the holy Trinity, ☩ one God, who forgives all our sin,
whose mercy endures forever. **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 your timing,
and awaken us to your presence 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.



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.

*APOSTOLIC 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.

*KYRIE

ACS Setting 12

Ky - ri - e e - lei - son. Lord, have mer - cy.

Chris - te e - lei - son. Christ, have mer - cy.

Ky - ri - e e - lei - son. Lord, have mer - cy.

*PRAYER OF THE DAY

Let us pray together:

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.

FIRST READING:

Isaiah 35:1-10

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.

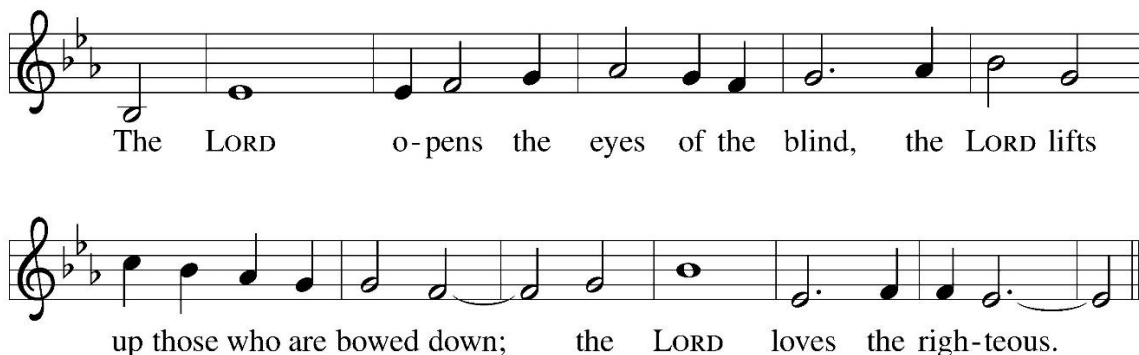
¹⁰ And the ransomed of the Lord shall return
and come to Zion with singing;
everlasting joy shall be upon their heads;
they shall obtain joy and gladness,
and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

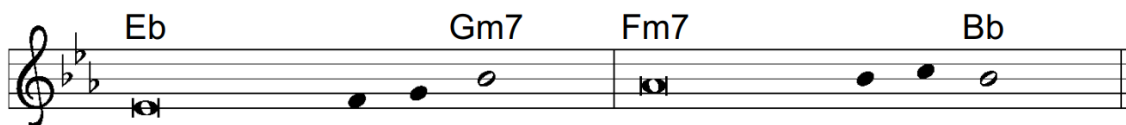
PSALM 146:5-10 (Sung)

PSALM REFRAIN



The LORD o-pens the eyes of the blind, the LORD lifts
up those who are bowed down; the LORD loves the right-teous.

PSALM TONE



Eb Gm7 Fm7 Bb

- ⁵ Happy are they who have the God of Jacob | for their help,
whose hope is in the | Lord their God;
- ⁶ **who made heaven and earth, the seas, and all that | is in them;**
who keeps promis- | es forever;
- ⁷ who gives justice to those who are oppressed, and food to | those who hunger.
The Lord sets the | captive free.
- ⁸ **The Lord opens the eyes of the blind; the Lord lifts up**
those who | are bowed down;
the Lord | loves the righteous. R
- ⁹ The Lord cares | for the stranger;
the Lord sustains the orphan and widow,
but frustrates the way | of the wicked.
- ¹⁰ **The Lord shall | reign forever,**
your God, O Zion, throughout all generations. | Hallelujah! R

SECOND READING:

James 5:7-10

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.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

*GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

We stand for the reading of the Gospel.



Al-le-lu - ia, al - le-lu - ia, al-le-lu - ia.



Repeat alleluia

Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of e - ter - nal life.

*GOSPEL:

Matthew 11:2-11

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 Rev. Dr. Olga-Maria Cruz

Silence is kept for reflection.



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.

***APOSTLE'S CREED**

We now profess the faith we share using the words of the Apostles' Creed:

**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.**

***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.

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. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

When bodies weaken and hearts grow fearful, speak your blessing. We pray especially for *Mary, Wyatt, Mabel, Doris, June, Ann, Julie, Carol, Anne, Judy, Jeff, Gloria, Lydia, Brian, James & Grace, Wil, Amy, Bob & Jane, Scott, Lynda, Ron & Flo, Mac, Monica, Avery, Doris, John, Abby, Mike, Tim, Arleen, Betty, Linda, Kristen, Natalie, Henry, Glenn, Gary, Connie, Greg, Helen & Ron, and Max.* 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 immigrants. *Especially we pray for Global Refuge 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. 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.

GRATITUDE

OFFERING

OFFERTORY

Mary's Song (Our King of Peace)

Wendell Kimbrough

The musical score is written on three staves in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. The melody is simple and hymn-like. The lyrics are: 'If we live, we live to the Lord. If we die, we die to the Lord. So then, wheth-er we live or wheth-er we die, we are the Lord's.' The score includes triplet markings over the words 'wheth-er' on the second and third lines.

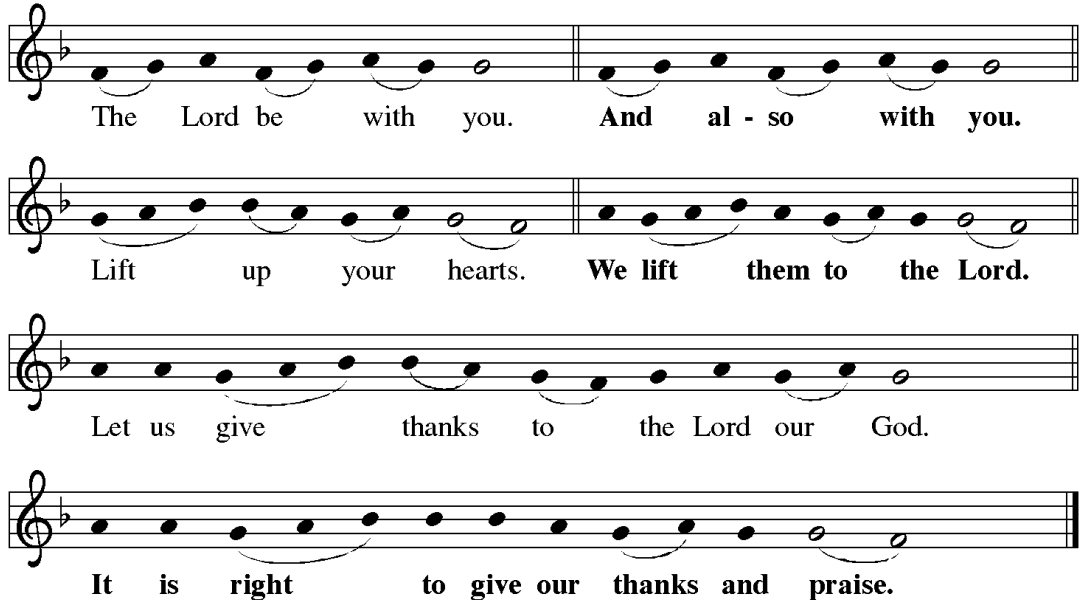
If we live, we live to the Lord. If we
die, we die to the Lord. So then, wheth-er we live or
wheth-er we die, we are the Lord's.

***OFFERING PRAYER**

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.
Amen.

*THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

DIALOGUE



The musical notation for the Dialogue section consists of four staves, each with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The notes are quarter notes, and the lyrics are written below the staves. The first staff has a double bar line after the first measure. The second staff also has a double bar line after the first measure. The third and fourth staves do not have double bar lines.

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.

*PREFACE

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:

*HOLY, HOLY, HOLY

ACS Setting 12



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

THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE

Holy One, the beginning and the end, the giver of life:
Blessed are you for the birth of creation.
Blessed are you in the darkness and in the light.
Blessed are you for your promise to your people.
Blessed are you in the prophets' hopes and dreams.

Blessed are you for Mary's openness to your will.
Blessed are you for your Son Jesus,
the Word made flesh.

In the night in which he was handed over,
our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks.
He 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.

Let us proclaim the mystery of faith:

Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

With this bread and cup, we remember your Word
dwelling among us, full of grace and truth.
We remember our new birth in his death and resurrection.
We look with hope for his coming.
Come, Lord Jesus.

Holy God, we long for your Spirit.
Come among us. Bless this meal.
May your Word take flesh in us.
Awaken your people. Fill us with your light.
Bring the gift of peace on earth.
Come, Holy Spirit.

All praise and glory are yours, Holy One of Israel,
Word of God incarnate, Power of the Most High,
one God, now and forever.
Amen.

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

*LORD'S PRAYER

Our Fa-ther in hea - ven hal-low - ed be Your
Name. Your king-dom come, your will be done, on earth as in hea - ven.
Give us this day our dai - ly bread. For - give us our
sins, as we for-give those who sin a-gainst us. Save us from the time of trial but de-
liv - er us from e - vil. For the king-dom, the pow'r, and the glo-ry are yours
now and for - ev - er. A - men. A - men. A - men.

*INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Here is life. God is with us.
Come, receive what God has promised.
Thanks be to God.

COMMUNION

The baptized children of God are invited by the Lord to the Lord's Table where we receive Jesus' very body and blood in, with, and under the bread and wine. We commune at the communion rail where we receive the Body and Blood of Christ. Gluten free bread and grape juice are available. If you wish to commune, but cannot come forward, let an usher know and Pastor will come to you. If you do not wish to commune, you are welcome to come forward to receive a blessing. You may wish to remain at the rail for a time of personal prayer following which you may return to your pew down the side aisle.

LAMB OF GOD*Be Known to Us Lord Jesus*

ACS 12

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

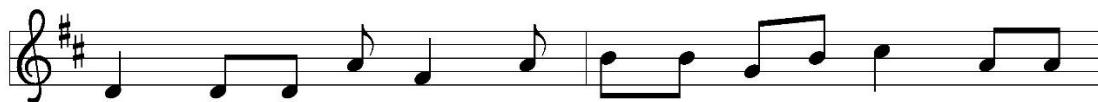
mer-cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the

world; grant us peace, grant us peace.

COMMUNION HYMN(S)*All Earth Is Hopeful
We Are Waiting for Jesus
(Next pages)*ELW 266
ACS 905



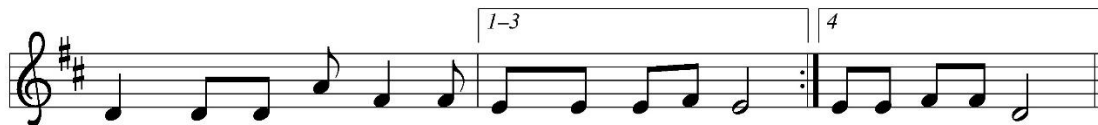
To - da la tie - rra es - pe - ra al Sal - va - dor
 1 All earth is hope - ful, the Sav - ior comes at last!
 2 Peo - ple of Is - rael, you heard the proph - et tell:
 3 Moun - tains and val - leys will have to be pre - pared;
 4 We first saw Je - sus a ba - by in a crib.



y el sur - co a - bier - to, la ob - ra del Se - ñor; es el
 Fur - rows lie o - pen for God's cre - a - tive task: this, the
 "A vir - gin moth - er will bear Em - man - u - el"; she con -
 new high - ways o - pened, new pro - to - cols de - clared. Al - most
 This same Lord Je - sus to - day has come to live in our



mun - do que lu - cha por la li - ber - tad, re -
 la - bor of peo - ple who strug - gle to see how
 ceived him, "God with us," our broth - er, whose birth re -
 here! God is near - ing, in beau - ty and grace! All
 world; he is pres - ent, in neigh - bors we see our



cla - ma jus - ti - cia y bus - ca la ver - dad. dar - nos li - ber - tad.
 God's truth and jus - tice set ev - 'ry - bod - y free.
 stores hope and cour - age to chil - dren of this earth.
 clear ev - 'ry gate - way, in haste, come out in haste!
 Je - sus is with us, and ev - er sets us free.



1 We are wait - ing for Je - sus; Je - sus brings peace.
2 We are wait - ing for Je - sus; Je - sus brings peace.



We are wait - ing for Je - sus; Je - sus brings peace.
We are wait - ing for Je - sus; Je - sus brings peace.



Sun of jus - tice, shine up - on us; we are trust - ing in your prom - ise.
Lov - ing Shep - herd, walk be - side us; stir our hearts, and gent - ly guide us.



We are wait - ing for Je - sus; Je - sus brings peace.
We are wait - ing for Je - sus; Je - sus brings peace.

***POST COMMUNION BLESSING**

The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ
strengthen you and keep you in His grace.

Amen.

***PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

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.
Amen.**

SENDING HYMNPrepare the Royal Highway*

ELW 264



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:



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

***BENEDICTION**

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.

***DISMISSAL**

Go in peace. Keep awake. **Thanks be to God.**

POSTLUDE*The King of Glory*

W&P 136

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