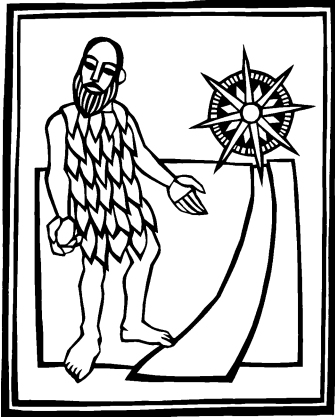


St. Matthew's Lutheran Church

Third Sunday of Advent

December 14, 2025 – 9:30 a.m.



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.

Pastor Christian McMullan

Daniel S. Bower, Music Director

Craig Miller, Director of Youth and Family Ministries

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WELCOME

Please stand

CALL TO WORSHIP

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.

C: Amen.

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

Silence is kept for reflection.

P: Long-expected God,

**C: 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 selfishness,
and teach us to live in harmony with our neighbors.**

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

Amen.

P: God judges us not as we deserve,
but according to God's own mercy, favor, and love.

† You are forgiven and freed,
Saved and made whole by grace,
and ready to welcome the Savior.

C: Amen.

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH

**C: We are a fam'ly whose hearts are blazing
So let's raise our candles and light up the sky
Praying to our Father in the name of Jesus
Make us a beacon in darkest times**

Litany

A: At every beginning there is a yearning for the one who is arriving.

C: Open us up to your coming.

A: We gather together to allow our deeply held hopes to be reshaped by God's promises.

C: Open us up to your coming.

A: We wait for the day when God will make for us a future that is no longer predicated on our fear.

C: Open us up to your coming.

A: We find a new receptiveness within us that desires God's will over our own will and relies on God's justice and mercy to accomplish it.

C: Open us up to your coming.

A: With the lighting of these candles, let us welcome Christ's Spirit whose flame brings warmth to winter and fills this place with the glow of hope.

Let us pray,

Light three candles.

Blessed are you, O Lord our God, ruler of the universe.
Your prophets spoke of a day when the desert would blossom
and waters would break forth in the wilderness.
Bless us as we light the candles on this wreath.
Strengthen our hearts
as we prepare for the coming of the Lord.
May he give water to all who thirst,
for he is our light and our salvation.
Blessed be God forever.
Amen.

**C: So carry your candle run to the darkness
Seek out the helpless deceived and poor
Hold out your candle for all to see it
Take your candle and go light your world
Carry your candle run to the darkness
Seek out the hopeless confused and torn
Hold out your candle for all to see it**

**Take your candle and go light your world
Take your candle and go light your world**

PRAYER OF THE DAY

C: Stir up your power, O Holy Spirit, and come. Fire up the wills of all who look to you 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, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Please be seated

FIRST READING

Isaiah 35:1-10

A: A reading from the Book of Isaiah, the thirty-fifth chapter.

- 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.

A: The Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

CHILDREN'S SERMON

SECOND READING

Luke 1:46b-55

A: A reading from the Magnificat of St. Luke, the first chapter.

A: ^{46b} My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,
⁴⁷ my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

**C: ⁴⁸ for you, Lord, have looked with favor on your lowly servant.
From this day all generations will call me blessed:**

A: ⁴⁹ you, the Almighty, have done great things for me
and holy is your name.

**C: ⁵⁰ You have mercy on those who fear you,
from generation to generation.**

A: ⁵¹ You have shown strength with your arm
and scattered the proud in their conceit,

**C: ⁵² casting down the mighty from their thrones
and lifting up the lowly.**

A: ⁵³ You have filled the hungry with good things
and sent the rich away empty.

**C: ⁵⁴ You have come to the aid of your servant Israel,
to remember the promise of mercy,**

A: ⁵⁵ the promise made to our forebears,
to Abraham and his children forever.

A: The Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Christ Be Our Light ELW 715

Longing for light, we wait in darkness.
Longing for truth, we turn to you.
Make us your own, your holy people,
light for the world to see.

Christ, be our light!
Shine in our hearts.
Shine through the darkness.
Christ, be our light!
Shine in your church gathered today.

GOSPEL

Matthew 11:2-11

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

C: 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.

C: Praise to you, O Christ.

Please be seated

MESSAGE

Please stand

HYMN

Thy Word

Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet
And a light unto my path
Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet
And a light unto my path

When I feel afraid
And I think I've lost my way
Still You're there right beside me
Nothing will I fear
As long as You are near
Please be near me to the end

Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet
And a light unto my path
Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet
And a light unto my path

I will not forget
Your love for me and yet
My heart forever is wandering
Jesus be my guide
And hold me to Your side
I will love You to the end

THE PRAYERS

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. After each intercession, the response is sung:

P and C: Peace on earth, peace on earth

Lord, hear our pray'r, your peace on earth

Peace on earth, peace on earth

Lord, hear our pray'r, your peace on earth

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

C: Amen.

THE SHARING OF THE PEACE

P: The Peace of the Lord be with you always.

C: And also with you.

Please be seated

THE OFFERING

Please stand

PRESENTATION OF THE GIFTS

In gratitude to God we give out of the abundance that God has given us.

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 coming kingdom.

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 God thanks and praise.

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, death, and despair,

you sent the prophets to proclaim your justice and mercy.

At this end of the ages your Son Jesus came to heal all the suffering world,
and embody your love fully.

In the night in which he was betrayed,

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.

Remembering, therefore, his birth, life, death and resurrection,

we await his coming again in righteousness and peace.

C: Christ has died, Christ has risen, Christ will come again.

Send your Spirit on us and on this bread and wine we share:

strengthen our faith, increase our hope, and bring to birth the joy of your Son.

Through Christ all glory and honor is yours,

Almighty God, with the Holy Spirit,

in your holy church,

both now and forever.

C: Amen.

P: Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray together our Lord's Prayer:

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

Please be seated

COMMUNION

This is God's table so all are welcome to join the feast.

Grape juice and gluten free wafers are available.

P: Here is life. God is with us.

Come, receive what God has promised.

C: Amen.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

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

C: Amen.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Please stand

BLESSING

P: May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing,
grant you patience in waiting,
and peace in the darkness,
so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

C: Amen.

SENDING HYMN

People, Look East ELW 248

People, look east. The time is near
of the crowning of the year.
Make your house fair as you are able,
trim the hearth and set the table.
People, look east, and sing today—
Love, the Guest, is on the way.

Furrows, be glad. Though earth is bare,
one more seed is planted there.
Give up your strength the seed to nourish,
that in course the flow'r may flourish.
People, look east, and sing today—
Love, the Rose, is on the way.

Stars, keep the watch. When night is dim,
one more light the bowl shall brim,
shining beyond the frosty weather,
bright as sun and moon together.
People, look east, and sing today—
Love, the Star, is on the way.

Angels announce with shouts of mirth
him who brings new life to earth.
Set ev'ry peak and valley humming
with the word, the Lord is coming.
People, look east, and sing today—
Love, the Lord, is on the way.

DISMISSAL

P: Go in peace. Keep awake.
C: **Thanks be to God.**

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