

WELCOME

HOPE LUTHERAN CHURCH

ADVENT MIDWEEK 3

DECEMBER 17, 2025



AS WE GATHER

“Prepare!” is often the watchword of the season as the world gets ready for another celebration of Christmas. An integral part of any preparation is decoration. We see decorations everywhere this time of year. The world may not comprehend the real meaning of Christmas, but even secular preparations use many of the same decorations beloved by Christians—an appropriation we shouldn’t mind at all, because these decorations point us to Christ. This year, as we look forward again to the coming of the Messiah, we take a fresh look at how the adornments of the season draw our eyes to Jesus, that we may more richly behold the love, peace, joy, and hope He comes to bring as this beauty is set before us.

Tonight, we focus on the manger—that central part of miniature models of the nativity scene that abound each December. Unlike lights and evergreens, the symbols that aided our meditation these last two weeks, the manger is distinctly Christian. In it, we behold Mary, Joseph, the shepherds, the Magi, the angels, and the stable animals all gathered around the baby Jesus. The manger and nativity scene represent a crucial, historical event: God taking on human form and human nature so that He could take our place and redeem us from all sin. We behold it with fresh eyes this evening.

OPENING HYMN

“People, Look East”

People, Look East

BESANÇON

French

Eleanor Farjeon, 1881–1965

Setting by Phillip Magness

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.

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VERSICLES AND GLORIA PATRI *Isaiah 40:3b,c, 5; Psalm 118:26*

P Prepare the way of the LORD;

C **make straight in the desert a highway for our God.**

P Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!

C **We bless you from the house of the LORD.**

P And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed,

C **and all flesh shall see it together.**

C **Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.**

SALUTATION

P The Lord be with you.

C **And also with you.**

PRAYER

P Let us pray.

Almighty, ever-living, and everlasting God, our help in ages past and hope for years to come, You sent Your Son into our flesh to live among us in our world and to walk with us in our times and places so that we would be saved from all sins in every time and place. As we survey anew Jesus' journey from the manger to the cross, grant that we may draw great comfort and confidence in the reality of Your birth, that faith may again be kindled in our hearts; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, ever one God, world without end.

C **Amen.**

FIRST READING

1 John 1:1–4

P A reading from First John, the first chapter.

¹That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—

²the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us—³that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. ⁴And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.

P O Lord, have mercy on us.

C **Thanks be to God.**

RESPONSIVE READING

Philippians 2:1–8

P So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.

C **Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.**

P Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made Himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.

C **And being found in human form, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.**

SECOND READING

Matthew 1:18–25

P A reading from St. Matthew, the first chapter.

¹⁸Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹And her husband Joseph, being a just man and

unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. ²⁰But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹She will bear a son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.” ²²All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:

²³“Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call His name Immanuel” (which means, God with us). ²⁴When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, ²⁵but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called His name Jesus.

P O Lord, have mercy on us.

C **Thanks be to God.**

RESPONSORY

Luke 1:32; John 1:14a; Isaiah 53:3d, 5

P He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to Him the throne of His father David.

C **The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.**

P He was despised, and we esteemed Him not.

C **The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.**

P But He was wounded for our transgressions; He was crushed for our iniquities; upon Him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with His stripes we are healed.

C **The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.**

HYMN

“Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus”

LSB 338

SERMON

Rev. Dr. Timothy Oswald

OFFERING

LORD'S PRAYER

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

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.**

ADVENT LITANY

Hebrews 10:25

P In peace, let us pray to the Lord:

C Lord, have mercy.

P For eyes to behold the Father's hand in all creation, let us pray to the Lord:

C Lord, have mercy.

P For awareness of beauty and the living traditions of the church that bring Christ to our eyes through arts and crafts, let us pray to the Lord:

C Lord, have mercy.

P That we may see the signs of Christ's return even as we celebrate His birth and encourage one another all the more as we see the Day drawing near, let us pray to the Lord:

C Lord, have mercy.

P That we may be living testimonies of new life in Christ through our loving service to our neighbor—both in word and in deed, let us pray to the Lord:

C Lord, have mercy.

P That we may be thankful for the bountiful harvest we enjoy amid the many festivities of this season, and be generous to the poor, let us pray to the Lord:

C **Lord, have mercy.**

P That we may love one another as God so loved us, forgive one another, and work together in the unity we have in Christ Jesus, let us pray to the Lord:

C **Lord, have mercy.**

P That we may not be lured into temptation or despair or be distracted by the false Christmases around us, but always hold the true meaning of Christmas in our hearts, let us pray to the Lord:

C **Lord, have mercy.**

CLOSING PRAYER

P O Most High, our rock and our salvation,

C **You have never abandoned us but have always come to the aid of Your people.**

P Grant that the eyes of our hearts would see You just as Your people of old saw Your Son when He came to this world, walked and taught among us, and gave His life for us.

C **Give us such faith that we may trust all that our fathers and mothers of old saw, touched, and heard—just as it has been revealed to us through Your Word.**

P For Your Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth, and comes to us even now by Your Spirit's power; through Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, ever one God, world without end.

C **Amen.**

BENEDICTION

Philippians 4:19, 23, adapt.

P Let us bless the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

P God will supply every need of yours according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus. His grace be with your spirit.

C **Amen.**

HYMN “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel” *LSB* 357:1, 5

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Pastor: **Rev. Dr. Timothy Oswald**

Organist: **George Kelm**

PLEASE JOIN US FOR OUR CHRISTMAS WORSHIP AS FOLLOWS:

Wednesday **Dec. 24** **6:00pm** **Christmas Eve Worship**

Thursday **Dec. 25** **10:00am** **Christmas Day Worship**

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