



Shepherd's theme for 2025-26 is "Praying with an Open Heart," based on Philippians 4:6-7. Three characters from Jesus' early life prayed with open hearts, and they experienced God's peace despite the unusual circumstances in which they found themselves. Their prayers were also songs to God—faithful expressions of thanksgiving and trust—because they had learned: When anything happens, pray; trust God will always answer; thank Him!

This Advent, as we prepare to celebrate the birth of our Savior, Jesus, please join us for our Wednesday evening services as we highlight the prayer-songs of Mary, Zechariah, and Simeon!

#### PRAYING WITH AN OPEN HEART...

...when Life Is Unexpected: Mary's Song | Dec. 3  
...with Confident Expectation: Zechariah's Song | Dec. 10  
...with Gratitude: Simeon's Song | Dec. 17

#### ADVENT WEDNESDAY SCHEDULE

5:15pm Soup Supper in the Parish Hall  
6:30pm Worship, with Special Music, Children's Chat

#### CHRISTMAS PROGRAMS

Dec. 11 ELC Christmas Program | 6p in the Gym, reception following  
Dec. 21 Sunday School Christmas Program | 10:45a Contemporary, in the Gym



#### ✠ IN THE NAME OF JESUS ✠

#### INVOCATION *Pastor Brad Stoltenow*

#### OPENING SENTENCES *John 8:12, 1:5; Luke 24:29; 1 Corinthians 4:5; 2 Corinthians 4:6*

P: Jesus Christ is the Light of the world,  
C: **the light no darkness can overcome.**  
P: Stay with us, Lord, for it is evening,  
C: **and the day is almost over.**  
P: Let Your light scatter the darkness  
C: **and illumine Your Church.**

**ALL: Joyous light of glory: of the immortal Father; heavenly, holy, blessed Jesus Christ. We have come to the setting of the sun, and we look to the evening light. We sing to God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: You are worthy of being praised with pure voices forever. O Son of God, O Giver of life: the universe proclaims Your glory!**

#### THANKSGIVING FOR LIGHT

P: Blessed are You, O Lord our God, king of the universe, who led Your people Israel by a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. Enlighten our darkness by the light of your Christ; may His Word be a lamp to our feet and a light to our path; for You are merciful, and You love Your whole creation and we, your creatures, glorify You, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.  
C: **Amen!**

#### LUTHER'S EVENING PRAYER

*from Luther's Small Catechism*

**ALL: I thank You, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have graciously kept me this day; and I pray that You would forgive me all my sins where I have done wrong, and graciously keep me this night. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.**

#### HYMN # 357:6 & 7 "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel"

**O come, Thou Dayspring from on high, and cheer us by Thy drawing nigh;  
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night, and death's dark shadows put to flight.**

*Refrain: Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!*

**O come, Desire of nations, bind in one the hearts of all mankind;  
Bit Thou our sad divisions cease, and be Thyself our King of Peace. *Refrain:***

**THE STORY AND THE NUNC DIMITTIS** Luke 2:21-35 *p. 857 in the pew Bible*  
*God had promised: Simeon would meet his Savior before he died. At long last, he held Jesus in his arms. In prayer and praise, Simeon expressed his deep gratitude!*

**NUNC DIMITTIS ~ SIMEON'S SONG** *Please turn to p. 199 in the hymnal*

**CHILDREN'S CHAT** *Remember to thank God!* *Jodie Stoltenow*

**SCRIPTURE** Philippians 4:5b-7

The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

**MESSAGE** "Praying with an Open Heart...with Gratitude"

*Pastor Ben Oesch*

**OFFERING** *For giving options: ShepherdHillsChurch.org/Give*

**VOLUNTARY** "Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring"

*String Ensemble*

**COLLECT FOR PEACE**

P: O God, from whom come all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works, give to us, Your servants, that peace which the world cannot give, that our hearts may be set to obey Your commandments and also that we, being defended from the fear of our enemies, may live in peace and quietness; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: Amen!

**THE LORD'S PRAYER**

*Matthew 6:9-13; Luke 11:2-4*

**ALL:** 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!

**BENEDICTION**

*Psalm 103:1*

P: The almighty and merciful Lord, the Father, the ☩ Son, and the Holy Spirit, bless and preserve you.

**ALL:** Amen!

**HYMN** # 937 "Lord, Bid Your Servant Go in Peace"

**☩ TO GOD ALONE ALL GLORY! ☩**

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Martin Luther wrote a hymn based on the Nunc Dimittis: *In Peace and Joy I Now Depart* (LSB # 938). In a 1527 sermon, Luther commented on Simeon's words: "Simeon boasted that he could depart in peace as if death were nothing. He doesn't even call it death since he doesn't desire to give it so much dignity as to name it but says, 'Now You let Your servant depart in peace.' Simeon doesn't say 'Now let me die.' He calls it a going and departure, a sweet and proper sleep."

**Nunc Dimittis**

"Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace,  
according to Your word;  
for my eyes have seen Your salvation  
that You have prepared in the presence of all peoples,  
a light for revelation to the Gentiles,  
and for glory to Your people Israel."

*Luke 2:29-32*

**Meditation**

God's faithfulness, the Messiah's coming, and Jesus as the Redeemer for all people are important aspects of the *Nunc Dimittis*. Traditional Lutheran services typically have the *Nunc Dimittis* after receiving the Lord's Supper.<sup>1</sup> After years of God's long-suffering patience and warning, His glory departed from the temple (Ezekiel 10:1-22). Ezekiel received a hope-full vision of the glory of the Lord returning to the temple. Now the Holy Spirit revealed to Simeon the fulfillment of that return, in the form of the Christ Child whom he saw, held, and sang about. We also may leave worship in peace, for the Christian who has seen Christ in His Word and received Him bodily in Holy Communion can echo these words of praise for our salvation with trusting, confident faith.

Another place the *Nunc Dimittis* is included in Lutheran circles is in the liturgy of the funeral service order (in *LSB*, p. 281). Scriptures contain numerous references to a believer's death as sleep (e.g., Jairus' daughter, Mark 5:39, Luke 8:52; Stephen, Acts 7:70; witnesses to the resurrected Jesus, 1 Corinthians 15:6). Even the Christian's daily pattern of lying down to sleep and rising in the morning is a rehearsal of death and resurrection.

Maybe Simeon, a man of patience and peace, had times where he felt he was departing the temple *in pieces* instead of in peace, as yet another day passed with no glimpse of The Promised One. Until, that is, 40 days after Jesus was born, when Joseph and Mary presented Jesus in the temple to fulfill ceremonial law. Here was the answer to Simeon's patient waiting! Here was Simeon's, and the world's, Peace. What enables a Christian to face death with patient serenity? Faith in the risen Christ, our Salvation.

With its elements of fulfillment, peace, and rest, the early church viewed the *Nunc Dimittis* as appropriate for the ending of the day. Since the 4th century, it has been used as part of the liturgy in such evening services as *Compline*, *Vespers*, and *Evensong* or *Evening Prayer*. Easter will be another joyful opportunity to sing the *Nunc Dimittis*, because Jesus' resurrection is proof that we have salvation—we, like Simeon, have seen our salvation in the risen Christ! We, like Simeon, pray and praise with gratitude to our gracious God!

<sup>1</sup> Having the *Nunc Dimittis* spoken or sung after the Lord's Supper was not a common worship practice until American Lutheranism. Wilhelm Loehe, a German Lutheran who sent myriad missionaries to America, included the *Nunc Dimittis* in an agenda he published in 1844.

