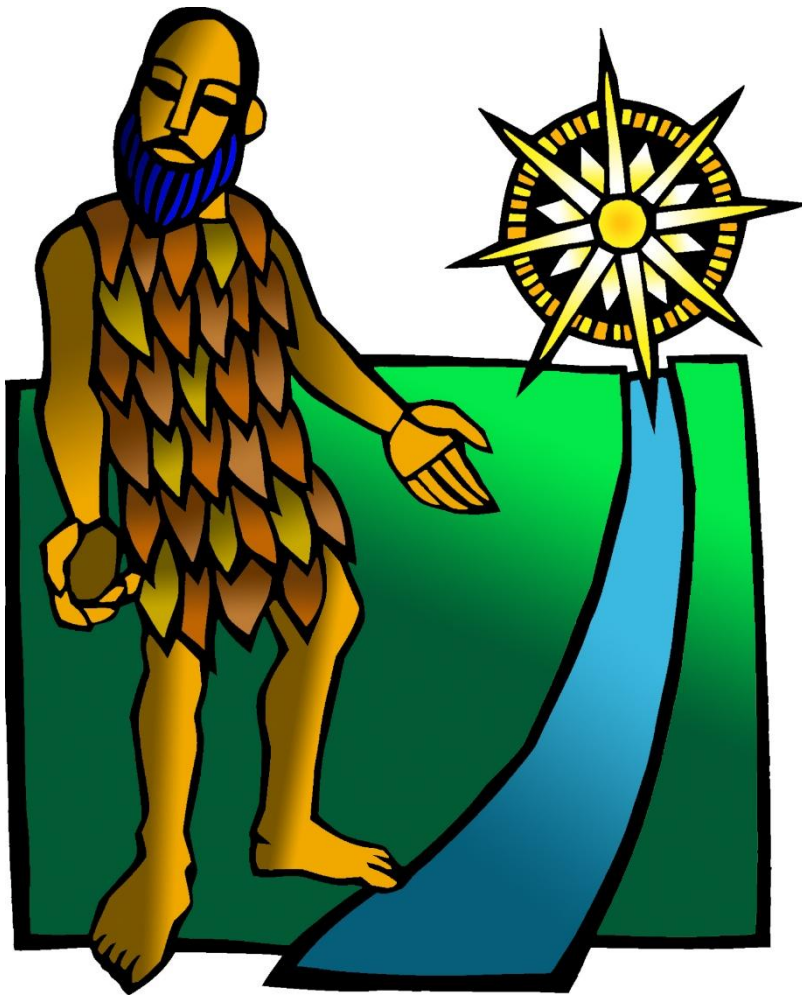


# THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

DECEMBER 14, 2025



**ST. PAUL'S**

Evangelical Lutheran Church

# WELCOME

Welcome! We are glad you are joining our community of faith for worship today. Whether you are a long-time Lutheran, or you come from another Christian tradition, or you're wandering or wondering about faith and the church, you are welcome to participate in worship in whatever ways are comfortable for you. If you are new to St. Paul's you can request more information on our web site contact page here: [www.stpaulsbrenham.org/contact](http://www.stpaulsbrenham.org/contact)

Our worship liturgy is rooted in the ancient church's practice of gathering on Sundays to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus through hearing God's Word and sharing the communion meal in the presence of Christ. We welcome all baptized Christians to receive communion. Children who are communing in other churches are invited to commune here. All who are not receiving are invited to come forward for a blessing—you may indicate you want a blessing by holding your hands together or crossing your arms in front of you.

This bulletin is a helpful guide to our worship liturgy, as are ushers and friendly people gathered here with you to worship God together.

## ST. PAUL'S STAFF

<b>Michael Coffey</b>	Lead Pastor
<b>Donna Krueger</b>	Pastor of Care Ministry
<b>Diane Garrett</b>	Organist
<b>Larry Smith</b>	Choir Director
<b>Dr. Sarah Burke</b>	Director of Contemporary Music
<b>Lisa Eben</b>	Financial Director
<b>Thomas Johnson</b>	Communications Coordinator
<b>Anne Briggs</b>	Membership Coordinator
<b>Sarah Zwahr</b>	Director of Youth and Family
<b>Julie Guiberteau</b>	Media Technician
<b>Sandra Ehlinger</b>	Head of Christian Day School

## CONTACT US

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*St. Paul's is a congregation of  
the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.  
Learn more at [www.elca.org](http://www.elca.org)*

### THIRD 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.

### OFFERING

Offering plates are on the welcome table in the narthex. Feel free to leave your offering there. The offering will be presented during the worship liturgy. You can also make an offering online at [www.stpaulsbrenham.org/give](http://www.stpaulsbrenham.org/give)

### FIRST AID

A First Aid Kit and AED (defibrillator) are located in the closet of the usher room in the Narthex.

# GATHERING

## PRELUDE

*On Jordan's Banks* W. Pelz

## SOUNDING OF THE BELL

*When the bell sounds, please stand as you are able and face the procession.*

## ADVENT DIALOGUE

The Spirit and the church cry out:

**Come, Lord Jesus!**

All those who await his appearance pray:

**Come, Lord Jesus!**

The whole creation pleads:

**Come, Lord Jesus! May it be so.**

## PROCESSION

*Kyrie Eleison*

*"Kyrie eleison" means "Lord, have mercy" and is part of the traditional liturgy of the church.*

*The assembly sings the Kyrie refrain. The cantor sings each petition, and the refrain is repeated.*

Ky-ri - e e - le - i - son. Chris - te e - le - i - son.

Ky-ri - e e - le - i - son, e - le - i - son, e - le - i - son.

## Cantor:

1. For those who | wait for peace,\* that you deliver the nations from warfare | and division. *Refrain*
2. For those who | wait for healing,\* that you renew them in body, | mind, and spirit. *Refrain*
3. For those who | wait for you,\* that you fill the world with your | holy presence. *Refrain*

## CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

Blessed be the holy Trinity, ☩ one God, whose home is heaven and earth,  
whose salvation is sure.

**Amen.**

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

*You may kneel or sit. 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 advent 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 welcomed by Jesus the Savior.  
 Amen.

*Please stand as you are able.*

#### LIGHTING THE ADVENT WREATH

#### ELW 262 *Wait for the Lord*

*The refrain is sung three times as the advent wreath is lighted.*

*During the second time the cantor sings the verse.*

Wait for the Lord, whose day is near.

The musical notation is for a two-part setting in G major (one sharp). The treble staff begins with a G4 chord, followed by a half note G4, a quarter note A4, a half note B4, and a quarter note C5. The bass staff begins with a G3 chord, followed by a half note G3, a quarter note A3, a half note B3, and a quarter note C4. The piece concludes with a final G4 chord in the treble and a G3 chord in the bass.

Wait for the Lord: be strong, take heart!

The musical notation continues the two-part setting. The treble staff has a G4 chord, a half note G4, a quarter note A4, a half note B4, and a quarter note C5. The bass staff has a G3 chord, a half note G3, a quarter note A3, a half note B3, and a quarter note C4. The piece concludes with a final G4 chord in the treble and a G3 chord in the bass.

*Verse: Rejoice in the Lord always: God is at hand. Joy and gladness for all who seek the Lord.*

#### GREETING

From the one who was, who is, and who is to come: Grace and peace be with you all.  
 And also with you.

**PRAYER OF THE DAY**

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.**

*Please be seated.*

**WELCOME**

**(10:30) DISMISSAL FOR CHILDREN'S CHURCH**

# WORD

**FIRST READING**

**Isaiah 35:1-10**

*The prophet describes the return from the Babylonian captivity as a joyous procession to Zion. God's coming reign will bring a renewal of creation in which health and wholeness will be restored. There is no need for fear, for God is coming to save.*

<sup>1</sup> The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad;  
the desert shall rejoice and blossom;  
like the crocus <sup>2</sup> 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.

<sup>3</sup> Strengthen the weak hands  
and make firm the feeble knees.

<sup>4</sup> 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."

<sup>5</sup> Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,  
and the ears of the deaf shall be opened;  
<sup>6</sup> 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;  
<sup>7</sup> 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.

<sup>8</sup> 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.  
<sup>9</sup> 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.

<sup>10</sup> 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.**

*The cantor sings the refrain, and the congregation repeats it.  
The psalm is sung responsively.*



The LORD lifts up those who are bowed down.

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

## (10:30) ANTHEM

*Zion Hears the Watchmen Singing* arr. John Leavitt

## SECOND READING

James 5:7-10

*In anticipation of the Lord's coming, Christians are called upon to cultivate patience rather than discontent.*

<sup>7</sup> 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. <sup>8</sup> You also must be patient. Strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is

near. <sup>9</sup> Brothers and sisters, do not grumble against one another, so that you may not be judged. See, the Judge is standing at the doors! <sup>10</sup> 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.**

*Please stand as you are able for the Gospel*

## GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

ELW 172 *Halle, Halle, Hallelujah*

*The congregation sings the Alleluia. The cantor sings the verse, and the congregation repeats the Alleluia.*

Hal-le, hal - le, hal - le - lu - jah. Hal - le, hal - le, hal - le - lu - jah. Hal - le, hal - le, hal - le - lu - jah. Hal - le - lu - jah. Hal - le - lu - jah. Hal - le - lu - jah.

*Verse: I am sending my messen- | ger before you,\* who will prepare your | way before you. (Matt. 11:10)*

## GOSPEL

Matthew 11:2-11

The holy gospel according to Matthew. **Glory to you, O Lord.**

<sup>2</sup> When John heard in prison what the Messiah was doing, he sent word by his disciples <sup>3</sup> and said to him, “Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?”

<sup>4</sup> Jesus answered them, “Go and tell John what you hear and see: <sup>5</sup> 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. <sup>6</sup> And blessed is anyone who takes no offense at me.”

<sup>7</sup> 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? <sup>8</sup> What, then, did you go out to see? Someone dressed in soft robes? Look, those who wear soft robes are in royal palaces. <sup>9</sup> What, then, did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. <sup>10</sup> 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.’

<sup>11</sup> “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.**

*Please be seated.*

## SERMON

Pastor Donna Krueger

*Please stand as you are able.*

## HYMN OF THE DAY

ELW 434 *Jesus Shall Reign*

*During Advent the creed is omitted.*

## PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

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.**

## PEACE

The peace of the Lord be with you always. **And also with you.**

*Greet one another with the peace of Christ. After the Peace, please be seated.*

## BIRTHDAY AND ANNIVERSARY PRAYERS OF BLESSING

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

# MEAL

## OFFERING

*An offering is gathered for the mission of the church, including the care of those in need.*

*Offering plates are on the welcome table in the narthex before and after the service.*

## MUSICAL OFFERING

**(8:00) Improvisation on "Veni, Veni, Emmanuel" C. Callahan**

**(10:30) See Amid the Winter Snow arr. John Leavitt**

*Please stand as you are able.*

## OFFERING PRAYER

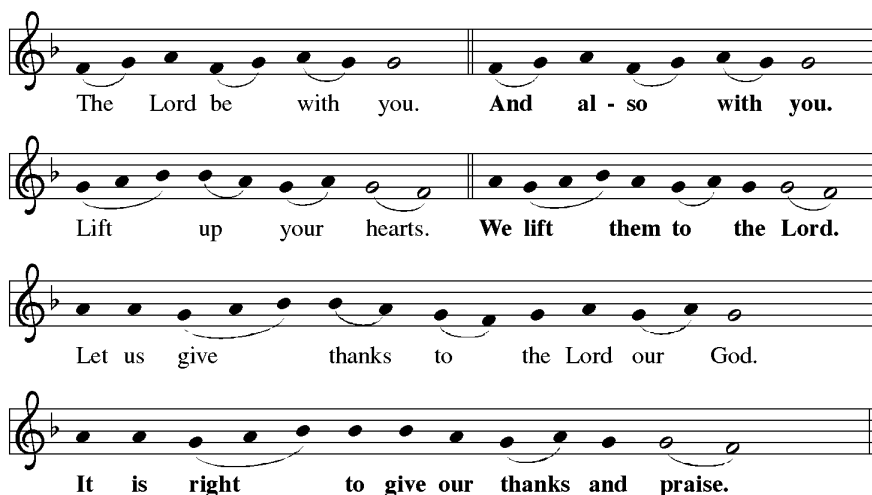
God of abundance,

**we bring before you the precious fruits of your creation,  
and with them our very lives.**

**Teach us patience and hope  
as we care for all those in need  
until the coming of your Son,  
our Savior and Lord. Amen.**



## DIALOGUE AND PREFACE

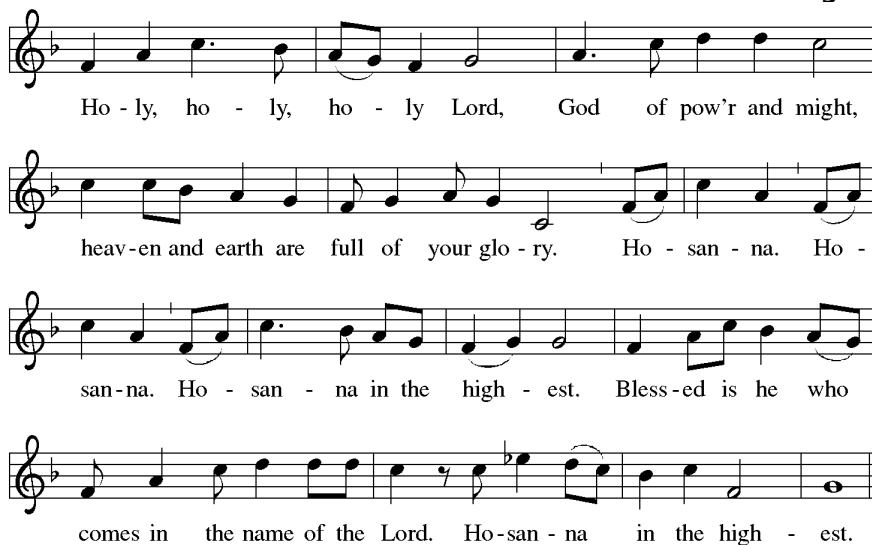


The Lord be with you. And al - so with you.  
Lift up your hearts. We lift them to the Lord.  
Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.  
It is right to give our thanks and praise.

It is indeed right... we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

## HOLY, HOLY, HOLY

ELW Setting Three page 144



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

## THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE

Holy and mysterious God...

Hoping beyond hope, we proclaim the mystery of faith:

**Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.**

Remembering all your promises fulfilled in Jesus... with eager expectation we cry out:

**Come, Lord Jesus!**

Send your Spirit into this broken world... and be filled with the courage to love.

**Come, Holy Spirit!**

All praise and thanks to you, holy God... here and now and into the great beyond.

**Amen.**

#### LORD'S PRAYER

**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.**

#### INVITATION

*We welcome all baptized Christians to receive communion. Children who are communing in other churches are invited to commune here. All who are not receiving are invited to come forward for a blessing—you may indicate you want a blessing by holding your hands together or crossing your arms in front of you. Please follow the guidance from the ushers. Gluten-free wafers are available on request.*

*Wine is red; grape juice is white. Those unable to come forward, remain seated and communion will be brought to you.*

#### LAMB OF GOD

ELW Setting Three page 146

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.

## MUSIC DURING COMMUNION

MUSIC

(8:00) *Once He Came in Blessing* M. Burkhardt

(10:30) *The Virgin's Slumber Song* Max Reger, arr. John Leavitt

SONG

ELW 272 *Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming*

*Please stand as you are able.*

## TABLE BLESSING

Christ has come to us now, renewing us in this sacred meal.

Live in the hope of Christ who will come to make all things new.

**Amen.**

## SONG AFTER COMMUNION

ELW 439 stanza 1 *Soon and Very Soon*

**Soon and very soon, we are going to see the King.**

**Soon and very soon, we are going to see the King.**

**Soon and very soon, we are going to see the King.**

**Hallelujah, hallelujah, we are going to see the King!**

## SENDING

### BLESSING

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.**

## SENDING SONG

ELW 267 *Joy to the World*

*Stanza 1: Congregation with Choir and Ringers*

*Stanza 2: Choir alone*

*Stanza 3: Congregation with Choir*

*Stanza 4: Congregation with Choir and Ringers*

## DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Christ is coming.

**Thanks be to God.**

## POSTLUDE

*Lo, He Comes with Clouds Descending* K. Kosche

# GOSPEL MESSAGE

## KEEPING WATCH

There's nothing quite like the first smell of springtime flowers emerging from the earth. The sensory explosion often catches us by surprise, reminding us that new life is surely coming soon, even though the world still seems to be slumbering and the buds we watch impatiently refuse to open. This third Sunday of Advent lifts the church and stirs our senses as we receive word, along with John the Baptizer, that Jesus is indeed the one we've been waiting for, the one who will turn buds into blooms. This is good news!

We might wonder, however, why we are hearing this news from John's perspective, out of all the voices in the growing community of Jesus-followers. Can we trust his word? After all, John is sitting behind bars at this time, caught in the gears of the world's injustice. John's unjust imprisonment reminds us that working for justice in the world can cause conflict with those in power. But while the world imprisons the innocent and strains to protect the corrupt and cruel, God sees such injustices and works to undo their power. This, too, is good news!

This third Sunday of Advent is sometimes called *Gaudete*, meaning "Rejoice." Cultivating joy amid the brokenness seen in the world is difficult, but God brings new beginnings where we have known only endings. New tendrils of life are emerging! Something new is coming! Let's share the good news as we wait and keep watch together.

## COMMEMORATIONS

**John of the Cross, renewer of the church, died 1591**

**Sunday, December 14, 2025**

John was a member of the Carmelite monastic order, and worked to reform it. His writings reflect a deep interest in mystical thought and meditation.

**Las Posadas**

**Tuesday, December 16, 2025**

This celebration, long popular in Mexico, takes its name from the "posadas," or lodgings, sought by Mary and Joseph in Bethlehem. Their search is reenacted in a neighborhood, unsuccessfully, until finally they are welcomed in, and a party commences.

**Katharina von Bora Luther, renewer of the church, died 1552**

**Saturday, December 20, 2025**

Born to an impoverished nobleman, Katie eventually took vows as a nun, but around age twenty-four she and several other nuns who were influenced by the writings of Martin Luther left the convent. Six children were born to Katie and Martin.