

Grace Lutheran Church

3020 Grace Church Rd. Salisbury, NC 28147

(704) 857-8641

www.grace-salisbury.com



3rd Sunday of Advent

December 14, 2025

- + Ministers: The People of Grace +
- + Pastor: the Rev. Joshua Copeland +
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- + Director of Youth & Family Ministries Sarah Stirewalt +
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- + Bookkeeper/Treasurer Anita Miller +
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- + Secretary Terri Brown +
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- + Director of Music Lynn Lippard +
- + Director of Children & Youth Choirs Emily Copeland +
- + Accompanist for Children & Youth Teresa Yost +
- + Accompanist for Chancel Choir Becky Lippard +
- + Pastor Emeritus Rev. Gene C. Bost +

+ *Those who are able please stand.*
(Congregation responses are printed in bold type)

WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRELUDE

THE ROAD HOME

+ **CONFESSION & FORGIVENESS**

Blessed be the holy Trinity, + one God, who makes a way in the wilderness, who walks with us on the road, who welcomes us home.

Amen.

On the road of life, we often carry burdens too heavy to bear. We stumble, we wander, we lose our way. But God meets us with mercy and grace. Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and one another.

(Silence for reflection)

Merciful God,

we confess that we have lost our way. We have traveled paths of selfishness and fear. We have carried baggage of anger and regret. We have failed to see the signs of your love along the way. Forgive us. Lighten our load. Guide our steps back to you, so that we may walk in hope, peace, joy, and love. Amen.

Hear the good news: God does not leave us wandering. Christ comes to meet us on the road and bring us home. In the name of Jesus, + you are forgiven, freed, and welcomed.

Amen.

+ **GATHERING HYMN**

“Savior of the Nations, Come”

LBW# 28



- 1 Sav - ior of the na - tions, come; show the glo - ry of the Son!
- 2 Not of hu - man seed or worth, but from God's own mys - tic breath,
- 3 Won-drous birth! Oh, won-drous child of the vir - gin un - de - filed!
- 4 God the Fa - ther is his source, back to God he runs his course;



Ev - 'ry peo - ple, stand in awe; praise the per - fect Son of God.
fruit in Mar - y's womb be - gun when God breathed the Word, his Son.
Might-y God and man in one, ea - ger now his race to run!
down to death and hell de - scends, God's high throne he re - as - cends.

- 5 He leaves heaven to return;
trav'ling where dull hellfires burn;
riding out, returning home
as the Savior who has come.

- 6 God the Father's precious Son
girds himself in flesh to run
for the trophies of our souls,
longer than this round earth rolls.

- 7 Shining stable in the night,
breathing vict'ry with your light;
darkness cannot hide your flame,
shining bright as Jesus' name.

+ 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.

+ LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH

Joy: Rest Stops and Surprises

Reader: *“The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad, the desert shall rejoice and blossom”* (Isaiah 35:1). On this road of Advent, we light the candle of joy, for God gives refreshment and gladness along the way.

Joy meets us when we least expect it.

God refreshes us for the journey.

Today we light the candles of hope, peace, and joy, celebrating God’s surprises along the way.

Christ is our light and our home.

(Two blue candles and the pink candle are lit.)

+ ADVENT HYMN

Melody: “O Come, O Come Emmanuel”

verse 1, 2, 3



1. Come, God of Hope, and li - ght our way, and guide us on the ro - ad to - day.
2. Come, Prince of Peace, and sh - ow us signs so we may foll - ow wh - ere love shines!
3. Come, Gift of Joy, our hea - rts re - new and fill our souls with li - ght so true.
4. Come, Ho - ly Love, and le - ad us home! Through wind - ing ways, we're ne' - re a - lone.



Help us to leave all fe - ars be - hind, and walk with you in pea - ce of mind!
Your peace will calm our wand'-ring hearts, your gui - ding light our streng - th im - parts!
Your joy sus - tains through tri - als we face, so lead us on with stead - fast Grace!
You call us on to li - ght the way, So oth - ers find your care a - long the way.



Re - joice! Re - joice! Em - man - u - el shall lead the way, O Pil - grims of God!

Text: Rev. Joshua Lewis Copeland 1995-

Tune: VENI EMMANUEL, French Processional 15th Century

+ SALUTATION

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

+ PRAYER OF THE DAY

Let us pray together ...

Joyful God, in deserts you cause flowers to bloom, and in waiting you give songs of gladness. Refresh us when our steps are heavy, and surprise us with joy that renews our strength. As we walk the road home, let our lives shine with your delight, through Jesus Christ, our joy and salvation. Amen.

CHILDREN'S SERMON

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

- 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 promises 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.**
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!**

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

(Melody: "Go Tell It On the Mountain")



Sing Al - le - lu - ia! Our Sav - ior comes to set us free!

Sing Al - le - lu - ia! Re - jice for Christ is near!

Re - jice! The Lord is co - ming! God lights our path a - head.

He comes to lift up our hearts and ban - ish fear and dread! *Refrain*

+ GOSPEL: Matthew 11:2-11

The holy gospel according to St. 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

“Rest Stops and Surprises”

+ HYMN OF THE DAY

“Rejoice, Rejoice, Believers”

LBW#25



1 Re - joice, re - joice, be - liev - ers, and let your lights ap - pear;
2 The watch - ers on the moun - tain pro - claim the bride - groom near;
3 The saints, who here in pa - tience their cross and suf - f'ring bore,
4 Our hope and ex - pec - ta - tion, O Je - sus, now ap - pear;



the eve - ning is ad - vanc - ing, and dark - er night is near.
go forth as he ap - proach - es with al - le - lu - ias clear.
shall live and reign for - ev - er when sor - row is no more.
a - rise, O Sun so longed for, o'er this be - night - ed sphere.



The bride - groom is a - ris - ing and soon is draw - ing nigh.
The mar - riage feast is wait - ing; the gates wide o - pen stand.
A - round the throne of glo - ry the Lamb they shall be - hold;
With hearts and hands up - lift - ed, we plead, O Lord, to see



Up, pray and watch and wres - tle; at mid - night comes the cry.
A - rise, O heirs of glo - ry; the bride - groom is at hand.
in tri - umph cast be - fore him their di - a - dems of gold.
the day of earth's re - demp - tion that sets your peo - ple free!

+ APOSTLES' CREED

God has made us his people through our Baptism into Christ. Living together in hope and trust, we confess our faith.

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

O Lord who has created and loved us and who calls to us be still and wait.

Silence is kept for reflection.

Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

All this we ask in the name of Lord, Jesus Christ who with You and the Holy Spirit, lives and reigns, One God, now and always.

Amen.

+ SHARING THE PEACE

The Peace of Christ be with you always.

And also with you.

OFFERING

ANTHEM

“Prepare the Way of the Lord”

Chancel Choir

+ OFFERTORY SONG (Melody: “Blessed Be the God of Israel” WOV#725)

**A weary world now summons us
to labor, love, and give;
to make our life an offering
to God, that all may live.
The church of Christ is calling us
to make the dream come true:
a world redeemed by Christ-like love;
all life in Christ made new.**

+ OFFERING PRAYER

Let us pray ...

Gracious God, you provide signs of hope along our journey. **We bring our gifts with hope.**

You make peace where the world is restless. **We bring our gifts for peace.**

You surprise us with joy in unexpected places. **We bring our gifts with joy.**

Receive these offerings, O God, and use them to guide all people home to you, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

+ GREAT THANKSGIVING (Melody: O Come All Ye Faithful!)

The Lord be with you.

And with you, his servant.

Oh, come, let us lift our hearts unto the Lord.

With hearts uplifted,

Thanks to him we render:

With joy we come before him

In gratefulness implore him

With thankful hearts adore him,

Evermore!

+ 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. Long ago you set your people on a journey, guiding them through wilderness and exile, promising a home where justice and mercy would dwell. Through prophets and messengers, you gave signs along the way, stirring hope, peace, joy, and love in waiting hearts. In these last days you have made your home with us in Jesus, the Word made flesh, the light that shines in our darkness, the road that leads us safely home to you. And so, with all travelers on the way, with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

+ SANCTUS (Melody: Hark! The Herald Angels Sing)

**Holy, Holy, Holy Lord,
God of Hosts, by heav'n adored!
Heav'n and earth cannot contain
All the glory of your name!
Hail, Hosanna, God most high!
Blest is He who now draws nigh!
In the name of God the King
Halleluias glad we sing:
Hail, Hosanna! Praises due
Be forever, Lord, to you!**

+ WORDS OF INSTITUTION

+ LORD'S PRAYER (Melody: It Came Upon a Midnight Clear)

**O Father, Lord, on Heav'n's high throne
Most holy be your Name.
Your Kingdom come. Your will be done.
On earth, in Heav'n - the same.
Give us this day the food we need;
Forgiven may we be
Into temptation do not lead;
From evil set us free.**

**Yours is the Kingdom; unto you
In grateful love we bow;
And yours the pow'r, Lord, let us view
Your gracious presence now.
The glory yours; Your praise be sung
By angel hosts and then
In ev'ry land, by ev'ry tongue
Forevermore! AMEN.**

+ INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Taste and see that the Lord is good!

Thanks be to God.

LAMB OF GOD (Melody: Away in a Manger)

**O, Lamb of our Lord God, the most holy Son,
This world needs your mercy, your love and
your grace.**

Draw near to us, dear Lord, bring liberation!

Have mercy upon us and grant us your peace!

**O, Lamb of our Lord God, the most holy
Son,**

**You came to this dark world to lead us from
night!**

Have mercy upon us and bring us your light!

And grant to the whole world your peace.

Amen.

DISTRIBUTION – All of God's children are welcome at the table for communion. Come forward in two lines to receive the bread from the pastor and wine/grape juice from a communion assistant.

+ TABLE BLESSING

The body and blood of our LORD and Savior Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you always in his grace.

Amen.

+ PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Let us pray together....

God of the journey, we give you thanks for this holy meal, where Christ meets us on the road and strengthens us for the way ahead. Send us now with hope, peace, joy, and love, that we may be signs of your welcome and witnesses of your light, until all your children find their home in you, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

+ BENEDICTION

The Lord bless you and keep you on the road of faith.

The Lord's face shine upon you and guide your steps with hope.

The Lord turn toward you in peace, and surprise you with joy.

And the blessing of God — Father, + Son, and Holy Spirit —
go with you now and always, as you find your home in Christ.

Amen.



1 Hark, the glad sound! The Sav - ior comes, the Sav - ior
 2 He comes the pris - 'ners to re - lease, in Sa - tan's
 3 He comes the bro - ken heart to bind, the bleed - ing
 4 Our glad ho - san - nas, Prince of peace, your wel - come



prom - ised long; let ev - 'ry heart pre -
 bond - age held. The gates of brass be -
 soul to cure, and with the trea - sures
 shall pro - claim, and heav'n's e - ter - nal



pare a throne and ev - 'ry voice a song.
 fore him burst, the i - ron fet - ters yield.
 of his grace to en - rich the hum - ble poor.
 arch - es ring with your be - lov - ed name.

+ DISMISSAL

Go in peace. God is with you.

Thanks be to God.

POSTLUDE

Useful Information

<u>Serving 12/14/2025</u>	
Organist	Teresa Yost
Children's Sermon	Patsy Parnell
Lector & Advent Wreath	Matt Sechler Family
Communion Assistant	Nicole Ritchie & Michael Miller
Acolyte	Kelsey Sloop
Security Team	Travis Nolan & Monty Brown
Sound System	Cody Ritchie
Teller Team	Wendy Diggs, Mary Sloop & Kristina Martin
Ushers	Mike Stout, Donnie Stout, Randy Basinger & Lynn Aldridge

<u>Serving 12/21/2025</u>	
Organist	Becky Lippard
Children's Sermon	Randy Basinger
Lector & Advent Wreath	Eric Storey Family
Communion Assistant	Nicole Ritchie & Michael Miller
Acolyte	Hudson Sechler
Security Team	Zach Moore & Cody Ritchie
Sound System	Finn Basinger
Teller Team	Wendy Diggs, Mary Sloop & Kristina Martin
Ushers	Mike Stout, Donnie Stout, Randy Basinger & Lynn Aldridge

THE FLOWERS ON THE ALTAR TODAY are given to the glory of God and in honor of Tony & Myra Sechler's wedding anniversary.

AMAZING GRACE SENIOR CITIZEN meeting will be Tuesday in the FLC at 10:30. The program will be music by Matthew Weaver and Clay Lungsford. Lunch will be catered.

USHERS NEEDED FOR 2026 We still have 10 usher spots open for the coming year. Please prayerfully consider serving our church family in this meaningful way. To volunteer, contact Gary Elmore or sign up using the QR code. Thank you!



ST. JOHN'S MEN'S CHORUS CONCERT will be today at 4:00pm.

CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS PROGRAM will be next Sunday. Breakfast will be at 9:00am with the program at 9:30am.

ALTAR FLOWERS FOR 2026 the list of Altar Flowers is on the bulletin board in the educational hallway. Please check the list for dates you have reserved and for available Sunday's during 2026.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Prayer List

Immediate needs:

Alice & Michael Baglio, Arlene Wise, Irene Miller, Bob Howard, Tara Mills

Community Concerns:

Scout & Skylar Harmon (*Fish Fry Recipients*), Debbie Everhart (*Vicki Morris*), Judy Frye (*Terri Brown*), Donnie Sloop (*Maribeth Baker*)

Comfort:

Ongoing Needs:

John Miller, Bobby & Barbara Sloop, Mary Miller, Kari Overcash, Janice Gray, Janis Eury, Allen & Lynn Sloop, Sophie Hooks, Louise Vaughn, Judy Copeland, Diane Bouk, Arlene Wise, Hazel Miller, Ronnie Gorman, Earl Thomas, Danny Benfield, Jesse Martin, Alice & Michael Baglio, Jerry Heilig

Those who serve others

Active Duty Military personnel and families; First Responders and families

This Week's Giving 12/07/2025		Needed Weekly	
Attendance 150			
Category	Amount	Per Spending Plan	Difference
Current	\$ 10,941.25		
Sunday School (Attendance 77)	\$ 75.00		
Angel Tree	\$ 245.00		
Poinsettias	\$ 90.00		
Property Fund	\$ 50.00		
Benevolence	\$ 640.00		
World Hunger	\$ 50.00		
	\$ 12,091.25	\$ 7,815.00	\$ 4,276.25
Altar Flowers	\$ 50.00		
Organ Fund	\$ 300.00		
Margie Martin Memorial - Fish Fry	\$ 70.00		
Rowan Helping Ministries	\$ 25.00		
Quilters	\$ 200.00		
Clean Water 5K	\$ 250.00		
Facility Rental	\$ 155.00		
Cemetery	\$ 50.00		
Kids of Grace	\$ 5.00		
Total	\$ 13,196.25		

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online giving.

