



# St. John's Lutheran Church

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.



## *The 3rd Sunday of Advent*

*December 14, 2025*

*10:30 Service of the Word*

Strange people, strange places, strange signs, and strange gifts. This is what we encounter today as we enter Matthew chapter 2. Though we know this story well, it is strange and mysterious. Why do these “Wise Men” come from the east? What do their gifts mean? And what kind of king are they searching for?

*Welcome to worship today!*

If you are visiting St. John's we invite you to sign the Guest Book in the back of the sanctuary.

Large print bulletins are available on the usher's stand.

The Zoom feed for this service is shown in the nursery.

# † GATHERING †

## Prelude and Announcements

### Confession and Forgiveness

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 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 anxious and impatient while waiting and weary of keeping awake. Free us from self-reliance, and teach us to live in service to our neighbors. Increase our trust in your timing and awaken us to your advent among us, that we may have the hope that you have promised.**

**Amen.**

P: God judges us not as we deserve, but according to God's own righteousness. You are freed and forgiven, saved by grace, and ready to welcome the Savior.

**C: Amen**

Gathering Hymn Rejoice, Rejoice, Believers  
*(For music turn to Hymn 244 in the Red Hymnal)*

- 1. Rejoice, rejoice, believers,  
and let your lights appear;  
the evening is advancing,  
and darker night is near.  
The bridegroom is arising  
and soon is drawing nigh.  
Up, pray and watch and wrestle;  
at midnight comes the cry.**
- 2. The watchers on the mountain  
proclaim the bridegroom near;**

**go forth as he approaches  
with alleluias clear.**

**The marriage feast is waiting;  
the gates wide open stand.  
Arise, O heirs of glory;  
the bridegroom is at hand.**

**3. The saints, who here in patience  
their cross and suff'rings bore,  
shall live and reign forever  
when sorrow is no more.  
Around the throne of glory  
the Lamb they shall behold;  
in triumph cast before him  
their diadems of gold.**

**4. Our hope and expectation,  
O Jesus, now appear;  
arise, O Sun so longed for,  
o'er this benighted sphere.  
With hearts and hands uplifted,  
we plead, O Lord, to see  
the day of earth's redemption  
that sets your people free!**

Text: Laurentius Laurenti, 1660-1722; tr. Sarah B. Findlater, 1823-1907; Music: Swedish folk tune

*Greeting* (2 Corinthians 13:13)

P: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

**C: And also with you.**

*Gathering Dialog* (John 1)

A: In the beginning was the Word,

**C: and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.**

A: In the Word was life,

**C: and the life was the light of all people.**

A: The Word became flesh and lived among us,

**C: and we have seen his glory, full of grace and truth.**

Prayer of the Day

A: Let us pray.

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.

**C: Amen**

† WORD †

Lighting of the Advent Wreath

*(Read immediately after the congregation is seated from the Prayer of the Day)*

A: Blessed are you, O Lord our God, ruler of the universe. Your prophets spoke of a day when the desert would blossom and water 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.

**C: Amen**

*As the third candle on the wreath is lit we sing:*

Oh Come, Oh Come, Emmanuel

*(For music turn to Hymn 257 in the Red Hymnal)*

**1. Oh come, Oh come Emmanuel,  
and ransom captive Israel,  
that mourns in lonely exile here  
until the Son of God appear.**

**Refrain: Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel  
Shall come to you, O Israel.**

**3. O come, O come, O Lord of might,  
as to your tribes on Sinai's height  
in ancient times you gave the law  
in cloud and majesty and awe. Refrain**

**4. O come, O Branch of Jesse, free  
your own from Satan's tyranny;  
from depths of hell your people save,  
and give them vict'ry o'er the grave. Refrain**

First Reading Isaiah 60:1-6

B: Arise, shine; for your light has come,  
and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.

<sup>2</sup> For darkness shall cover the earth,  
and thick darkness the peoples;  
but the Lord will arise upon you,  
and his glory will appear over you.

<sup>3</sup> Nations shall come to your light,  
and kings to the brightness of your dawn.

<sup>4</sup> Lift up your eyes and look around;  
they all gather together, they come to you;  
your sons shall come from far away,  
and your daughters shall be carried on their nurses' arms.

<sup>5</sup> Then you shall see and be radiant;  
your heart shall thrill and rejoice,\*  
because the abundance of the sea shall be brought to you,  
the wealth of the nations shall come to you.

<sup>6</sup> A multitude of camels shall cover you,  
the young camels of Midian and Ephah;  
all those from Sheba shall come.

They shall bring gold and frankincense,  
and shall proclaim the praise of the Lord.

*After the reading the reader may say:* The Word of the Lord

**C: Thanks be to God.**

Scripture Poetry Psalm 72:1-8, 10-14 (*read responsively*)

D: O God, give your king judgment,  
the son of the king  
your sense of what is right;

**C: help him judge your people  
and do right for the powerless.**

D: May mountains bear peace,  
hills bring forth justice.

**C: May the king defend the poor,  
set their children free,  
and kill their oppressors.**

D: May he live as long as the sun,  
as long as the moon, for ever.

**C: May he be like rain on a field,  
like showers that soak the earth.**

D: May justice sprout in his time,  
peace till moon is no more.

**C: May he rule from sea to sea,  
from the River to the ends of the earth.**

D: Kings from Tarshish and the islands  
will bring their riches to him.

**C: Kings of Sheba, kings of Saba  
will carry gifts to him.**

D: All kings will bow before him,  
all the nations serve him.

**C: He will rescue the poor at their call,  
those no one speaks for.**

D: Those no one cares for  
he hears and will save,

**C: save their lives from violence,  
lives precious in his eyes.**

Second Reading Ephesians 3:1-12

B: This is the reason that I Paul am a prisoner for Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles—<sup>2</sup>for surely you have already heard of the commission of God's grace that was given to me for you, <sup>3</sup>and how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I wrote above in a few words, <sup>4</sup>a reading of which will enable you to perceive my understanding of the mystery of Christ. <sup>5</sup>In former generations this mystery was not made known to humankind, as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit: <sup>6</sup>that is, the Gentiles have become fellow-heirs, members of the same body, and sharers in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

Of this gospel I have become a servant according to the gift of God's grace that was given to me by the working of his power. <sup>8</sup>Although I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given to me to bring to the Gentiles the news of the boundless riches of Christ, <sup>9</sup>and to make everyone see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in\* God who created all things; <sup>10</sup>so that through the church the wisdom of God in its rich variety might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. <sup>11</sup>This was in accordance with the eternal purpose that he has carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord, <sup>12</sup>in whom we have access to God in boldness and confidence through faith in him.

*After the reading the reader may say:* The Word of the Lord

**C: Thanks be to God.**

Gospel Acclamation (Matthew 2:6)

**C: Alleluia. And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel. Alleluia.**

Gospel Reading Matthew 2:1-18

*The gospel is announced:*

P: The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter.

**C: Glory to you O Lord.**

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, <sup>2</sup>asking, “Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage.” <sup>3</sup>When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; <sup>4</sup>and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. <sup>5</sup>They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet:

<sup>6</sup>“And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,  
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;  
for from you shall come a ruler  
who is to shepherd my people Israel.””

<sup>7</sup>Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. <sup>8</sup>Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, “Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage.”

<sup>9</sup>When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. <sup>10</sup>When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. <sup>11</sup>On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. <sup>12</sup>And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

*After the reading:*

P: The Gospel of the Lord

**C: Praise to you O Christ.**

Children's Sermon

Sermon

Hymn of the Day We Three Kings of Orient Are  
(For music see Hymn 646 in the Blue Hymnal)

1. **We three kings of Orient are;  
bearing gifts we traverse afar,  
field and fountain  
moor and mountain,  
following yonder star.**

*Refrain:* **Oh, star of wonder, star of night,  
star with royal beauty bright;  
westward leading, still proceeding,  
guide us to thy perfect light!**

2. **Born a king on Bethlehem's plain,  
gold I bring to crown him again;  
king forever,  
ceasing never,  
over us all to reign. *Refrain***

3. **Frankincense to offer have I;  
incense owns a deity nigh;  
prayer and praising,  
gladly raising,  
worshipping God Most High. *Refrain***

4. **Myrrh is mine; its bitter perfume  
breathes a life of gathering gloom;  
sorrowing, sighing,  
bleeding, dying,  
sealed in the stone-cold tomb. *Refrain***

5. **Glorious now behold him arise,  
King and God and Sacrifice;  
heav'n sings  
alleluia:  
alleluia the earth replies. *Refrain***

Text and music: John Henry Hopkins Jr., 1820-1921, alt.

Response to the Word

P: In Christ you have heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation.

**C: We believe in him and are marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit.**

P: Living together in trust and hope, we confess our faith.

**C: 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.**

A: Build yourselves up on your most holy faith;

**C: pray in the Holy Spirit.** *(Jude 20)*

A: Keep yourselves in the love of God;

**C: look forward to the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ.** *(Jude 21)*

A: If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation:

**C: Everything old has passed away;  
behold, everything has become new!** *(2 Corinthians 5:17)*

### Peace

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

**C: And also with you.**

P: Let us share that peace with one another.

*The congregation may greet one another with a sign of Christ's peace.*

# † THANKSGIVING †

## Offertory and Gathering of Prayers and Offerings

*You are invited to write a prayer concern on the small blank slip of paper in your worship bulletin. This slip will be collected by the ushers in the offering plates. The concerns raised will be prayed for later in the service.*

## Hymn of Thanksgiving

Lord Let My Heart Be Good Soil

*For music turn to Hymn 713 in the Blue Hymnal*

**Lord, let my heart be good soil,  
open to the seed of your Word.**

**Lord, let my heart be good soil,  
where love can grow and peace is understood.**

**When my heart is hard,  
break the stone away.**

**When my heart is cold,  
warm it with the day.**

**When my heart is lost,  
lead me on your way.**

**Lord, let my heart,**

**Lord, let my heart,**

**Lord, let my heart be good soil.**

Text and music: Handt Hanson, b. 1950, Copyright 1985 Prince of Peace Publishing/Changing Church, Inc.

## Thanksgiving Prayer

P: Let us pray: Savior of the nations, come.

**C: Make your home here in us. Feed us with your love, that our faith shine ever new and our lives reveal your light. Amen.**

## Prayers of Intercession

P: With the whole people of God in Christ Jesus, let us pray for the church, those in need, and all of God's creation.

*Issues raised by the congregation are prayed for.*

*The prayer concludes:*

P: Into your hands, gracious God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your mercy; through Jesus Christ our Savior.

**C: Amen.**

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.**

† SENDING †

Blessing

P: 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.  
**C: Amen.**

Sending Hymn Prepare the Royal Highway  
(For music turn to Hymn 264 in the Red Hymnal)

**1. Prepare the royal highway;  
The King of kings is near!  
Let ev'ry hill and valley  
A level road appear!  
Then greet the King of glory,  
Foretold in sacred story:**

*Refrain* **Hosanna to the Lord,  
For he fulfills God's Word!**

**2. God's people, see him coming:  
Your own eternal king!  
Palm branches strew before him!  
Spread garments! Shout and sing!  
God's promise will not fail you!**

**No more shall doubt assail you!** *Refrain*

**3. Then fling the gates wide open  
To greet your promised king!  
Your king, yet ev'ry nation  
Its tribute too may bring.  
All lands will bow before him;  
Their voices join your singing:** *Refrain*

**4. His is no earthly kingdom;  
It comes from heav'n above.  
His rule is peace and freedom  
And justice, truth and love.  
So let your praise be sounding  
For kind-ness so abounding:** *Refrain*

Text: Frans Mikael Franzen, 1772-1847; Music: Swedish folk tune, 14<sup>th</sup> century

*Dismissal*

P: Go in peace. Serve the Lord.

**C: God's Work. Our Hands.**

**Worship assistants TODAY:**

Greeters and Ushers	Sue Kaufmann
Acolyte	Charlotte Stroup
Counters	Greg and Mary Zuege
Coffee Hour	Organ Celebration Cake

**Worship assistants for next Sunday, December 21, 2025**

Greeters and Ushers	Helen Crown
Acolyte	Elijah Young
Altar Care	
Communion Assistant	Rob Stroup
Counters	Janice Lockwood and Burdie Gillern
Coffee Hour	Cupcakes

Scripture readings from the *New Revised Standard Version Bible* copyright 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States. Psalm from *The Psalter* copyright 1994, Liturgical Training Publications. Variable worship texts from *Sundays and Seasons 2026*, copyright 2025 Augsburg Fortress

**St. John's Lutheran Church**  
888 County Road 9, Victor, NY 14564  
stjohnsvictor.com (585) 924-5192  
The Rev. Jonathan Deibler, Pastor  
Dongwon Shin, Pianist