



St. John's Lutheran Church

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.



4th Sunday of Advent

December 21, 2025

10:30 Holy Communion

Artificial Intelligence has become a hot and controversial topic. Is it good? Is it bad? Today the Sunday school children will present their annual Christmas presentation. We'll see what happens when people try to use AI to create the perfect religion. Not surprisingly, it runs into problems very fast!

Welcome to worship today!

If you are visiting with us 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 available 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 All Earth Is Hopeful
(for music, please turn to Hymn 266 in the Red Hymnal)

1. All earth is hopeful, the Savior comes at last!

**Furrows lie open for God's creative task:
this, the labor of people who struggle to see
how God's truth and justice set ev'rybody free.**

2. People of Israel, you heard the prophet tell:

**"A virgin mother will bear Emmanuel";
she conceived him, "God with us," our brother, whose birth
restores hope and courage to children of this earth.**

**3. Mountains and valleys will have to be prepared;
new highways opened, new protocols declared.**

**Almost here! God is nearing, in beauty and grace!
All clear ev'ry gateway, in haste, come out in haste!**

4. We first saw Jesus a baby in a crib.

**This same Lord Jesus today has come to live
in our world; he is present, in neighbors we see
our Jesus is with us and ever sets us free.**

Text and music: Alberto Taule, tr. Madeleine Forell Marshall, arr. Skinner Chavez-Melo; Text and music copyright 1972 Alberto Taule, admin. Virgil C. Funk; Tr. Copyright 1995 Madeliende Forell Marshall, admin. Augsburg Fortress; Arr. Copyright Estate of Skinner Chavez-Melo

Prayer of the Day

A: Let us pray.

Stir up your power, Lord Christ, and come. With your abundant grace and might, free us from the sin that hinders our faith, that eagerly we may receive your promises, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: Amen

† WORD †

Lighting of the Advent Wreath

A: Blessed are you, O Lord our God, ruler of the universe. In your Son, Emmanuel, you have shown us your light and saved us from the power of sin. Bless us as we light the candles on this wreath. Increase our longing for your presence, that at the celebration of your Son's birth his Spirit might dwell anew in our midst, for he is our light and our salvation. Blessed be God forever.

C: Amen

As the fourth candle on the wreath is lit we sing:

O Come, O 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***

5. **O come O Key of David, come,
and open wide our heav'nly home;
make safe the way that leads on high,
and close the path to misery. *Refrain***

First Reading Jeremiah 31:31-34

B: The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. ³²It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the Lord. ³³But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ³⁴No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, 'Know the Lord', for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.

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

C: Thanks be to God.

Scripture Poetry Psalm 139:1-18 (*Read responsively*)

D: You search me, Lord, and know me.

**C: Whenever I sit or stand,
you read my inmost thoughts;**

D: whenever I walk or rest,
you know where I have been.

**C: Before a word slips from my tongue,
Lord, you know what I will say.**

D: You close in on me,
pressing your hand upon me.

**C: All this overwhelms me—
too much to understand!**

D: Where can I hide from you?

How can I escape your presence?

C: I scale the heavens, you are there!

I plunge to the depths, you are there!

D: If I fly toward the dawn,
or settle across the sea,

**C: even there you take hold of me,
your right hand directs me.**

D: If I think night will hide me
and darkness give me cover,

**C: I find darkness is not dark.
For your night shines like day,
darkness and light are one.**

D: You created every part of me,
knitting me in my mother's womb.

**C: For such handiwork, I praise you.
Awesome this great wonder!
I see it so clearly!**

D: You watched every bone
taking shape in secret,
forming in the hidden depths.

**C: You saw my body grow
according to your design.
Your recorded all my days
before they ever began.**

D: How deep are your thoughts!
How vast their sum!

**C: like countless grains of sand,
well beyond my grasp.**

Second Reading Ephesians 3:14-21

E: For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, ¹⁵from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name. ¹⁶I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, ¹⁷and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. ¹⁸I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, ¹⁹and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

20 Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, ²¹to him be glory in

the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, for ever and ever.
Amen.

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

C: Thanks be to God.

Gospel Acclamation (1 John 4:10)

C: Alleluia. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Alleluia.

Gospel Reading John 3:17-21

The gospel is announced:

P: The Holy Gospel according to St. John the 3rd chapter.

C: Glory to you O Lord.

¹⁷“Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. ¹⁸Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God. ¹⁹And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. ²⁰For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. ²¹But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God.”

After the reading:

P: The gospel of the Lord

C: Praise to you O Christ.

Sunday School Christmas Program

Artificial Intelligence God

Hymn of the Day O Little Town of Bethlehem

(For music see Hymn 279 in the Red Hymnal)

**1. O little town of Bethlehem,
how still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep
the silent stars go by;
yet in the dark street shineth
the everlasting light.
The hopes and fears of all the years
are met in thee tonight.**

2. **For Christ is born of Mary,
and, gathered all above
while mortals sleep, the angels keep
their watch of wond'ring love.
O morning stars, together
proclaim the holy birth,
and praises sing to God the king,
and peace to all the earth!**

3. **How silently, how silently
the wondrous gift is giv'n!
So God imparts to human hearts
the blessings of his heav'n.
No ear may hear his coming;
but, in this world of sin,
where meek souls will receive him, still
the dear Christ enters in.**

4. **O holy child of Bethlehem,
descend to us, we pray;
cast out our sin, and enter in,
be born in us today.
We hear the Christmas angels
the great glad tidings tell;
oh, come to us, abide with us,
our Lord Immanuel!**

Text: Phillips Brooks, 1835-1893, Music: Lewis H. Redner, 1831-1908

Nicene Creed

P: Let us confirm our faith with the Nicene Creed

**C: We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.**

**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father;
through him all things were made.**

For us and for our salvation

**he came down from heaven,
was incarnate of the virgin Mary
and became truly human.**

**For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.**

**On the third day he rose again,
in accordance with the scriptures;
he ascended into heaven**

and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

**He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.**

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

**We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

Peace

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

C: And also with you.

P: We share that peace with one another.

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

Offertory and Gathering of Prayers and Offerings

During the offertory 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.

† MEAL †

Hymn of Thanksgiving Let the Vineyards Be Fruitful Lord

For music turn to page 35 in the Blue Hymnal

**Let the vineyards be fruitful, Lord,
and fill to the brim our cup of blessing.**

**Gather a harvest from the seeds that were sown,
that we may be fed with the bread of life.**

**Gather the hopes and dreams of all;
unite them with the prayers we offer now.
Grace our table with your presence, Lord,
and give us a foretaste of the feast to come.**

Offering Prayer

P: Let us pray. Merciful God,

**C: in the mystery of the Word made flesh, you embrace our lives
with your great love for humanity. With joy and gladness we ask
that these gifts may be for many a sign of that love, and that we may
continue to share in your divine life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.
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.

Great Thanksgiving

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

P: Lift up your hearts.

C: We lift them to the Lord.

P: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

C: It is right to give our thanks and praise.

P: 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 the Christ. You comforted your people with the
promise of the Redeemer, though whom you will also make all things
new in the day when he comes to judge the world in righteousness. And
so, with all the choirs of angels, with the church on earth and the hosts of
heaven, we praise your name and join in their unending hymn:

(Isaiah 6:3, spoken)

**C: Holy, holy, holy Lord,
God of power and might,
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.**

**Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

P: In the night in which he was handed over our Lord Jesus took bread, gave thanks, broke it, and gave it to his disciples saying, "Take and eat. This is my body, given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me." Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me."

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.**

Invitation to Communion

P: Here is life. God is with us. Come, receive what God has promised.

Communion Distribution

Welcome to the Lord's Supper! All who are baptized are invited to receive communion. We use wheat bread and wine for communion. If you would prefer a gluten free wafer instead of bread please tell the communion assistant. Also, if you prefer grape juice to wine, it is available pre-filled in the individual glasses. As we commune together everyone is invited to sing the following hymns:

Lamb of God (Page 39 of the Blue Hymnal)

286 *Your Little Ones, Dear Lord (Red Hymnal)*

248 *People, Look East (Red Hymnal)*

Communion Blessing After all have communed the pastor will say:

P: The body and the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in his grace.

C: Amen.

Post Communion Prayer

A: Let us pray:

God our host, at this table you have fed us with joy and gladness. Send us forth, eager to share the feast, welcome the stranger, and bear good fruit in the name of Jesus.

C: 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 Cold December Flies Away
(For music turn to Hymn 299 in the Red Hymnal)

1. Cold December flies away at the rose red splendor.

**April's crowning glory breaks
while the whole world wonders
at the holy unseen pow'r
of the tree which bears the flow'r.
On the blessed tree blooms the reddest flow'r
on the tree blooms the rose
here in love's own garden,
full and strong in glory.**

2. In the hopeless time of sin shadows deep had fallen.

**All the world lay under death.
Eyes were closed in sleeping.
But, when all seemed lost in night,
came the sun whose golden light**

**brings unending joy, brings the endless joy
of our hope, highest hope,
of our hope's bright dawning,
Son beloved of heaven.**

- 3. Now the bud has come to bloom, and the world awakens.
In the lily's purest flow'r
dwells a wondrous fragrance.
and it spreads to all the earth
from the moment of its birth;
and its beauty lives. In the flow'r it lives,
in the flow'r, and it spreads
in its heav'nly brightness
sweet perfume delightful.**

Text and music: Catalanian Carol; tr. Howard Hawhee

Dismissal

P: Go in peace. Prepare the way of the Lord.

C: God's Work. Our Hands.

Worship assistants TODAY:

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

Worship assistants for next Sunday, December 28

Greeters and Ushers	Linda Flood
Acolyte	Thomas Bullwinkle
Counters	Bill and Katy Stimmel
Coffee Hour	

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