



# St. John's Lutheran Church

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.



## *The Holy Innocents*

*December 28, 2025*

*10:30 Service of the Word*

Jesus escapes the sword in the gospel on this day – but not for long – not forever. He died for us. He died for the world, to put an end to the cycle of violence that continues to claim innocent victims. Rachel's lament, recorded in Jeremiah and echoed in Matthew, is not the last word. "There is hope for your future," says the Lord.

### *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,  
Wonderful Counselor,  
Mighty Savior,  
Prince of Peace.

**C: Amen.**

P: Trusting in God's steadfast love and faithfulness, let us confess our sin.

*Silence for reflection and self-examination*

P: Reconciling God,

**C: we yearn for your presence to transform our grief, pain, and despair. We confess that we have not always prepared room in our hearts for your love; we have not always recognized your presence among us; we have not always embraced your message of peace.**

**We cry out, weary with the burden of violence, oppression, and fear. We confess our failure to make room for those seeking refuge; our participation in violent systems that harm your innocent ones; our reluctance to embody your good news.**

**Be born in us today and teach us to sing the joyful song of your salvation. Amen.**

P: God's grace upon grace flows over you. Christ's presence redeems the whole creation. Your sins are forgiven. Let the earth rejoice and be glad!

**C: Amen.**

Gathering Hymn    Away in a Manger  
*(For music see Hymn 278 in the Red Hymnal)*

- 1. Away in a manger, no crib for his bed,  
the little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head;  
the starts in the bright sky looked down where he lay,  
the little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.**
- 2. The cattle are lowing; the baby awakes,  
but little Lord Jesus, no crying he makes.  
I love you, Lord Jesus; look down from the sky**

**and stay by my cradle till morning is nigh.**

3. **Be near me, Lord Jesus; I ask you to stay  
close by me forever and love me, I pray.  
Bless all the dear children in your tender care  
and fit us for heaven, to live with you there.**

Text: North American, 19<sup>th</sup> century. Music: James R. Murray, 1841-1905

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.

We remember today, O God, the killing of the innocent children of Bethlehem by order of King Herod. Receive into the arms of your mercy all innocent victims. By your great might frustrate the designs of evil tyrants and establish your rule of justice, love, and peace, 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 †

First Reading Jeremiah 31:15-17

B: Thus says the Lord:

A voice is heard in Ramah,  
lamentation and bitter weeping.

Rachel is weeping for her children;  
she refuses to be comforted for her children,  
because they are no more.

<sup>16</sup> Thus says the Lord:

Keep your voice from weeping,  
and your eyes from tears;  
for there is a reward for your work,  
says the Lord:

they shall come back from the land of the enemy;  
<sup>17</sup> there is hope for your future,  
says the Lord:

your children shall come back to their own country.

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

**C: Thanks be to God.**

Scripture Poetry Psalm 124 (*read responsively*)

D: Say it, Israel!

If the Lord had not been with us,

**C: if the Lord had not been for us  
when enemies rose against us,  
they would have swallowed us  
in their blazing anger,**

D: and the raging waters  
would have swept us away-

**C: rushing, surging water,  
thundering over us.**

D: Blessed be the Lord  
for saving our flesh from their teeth,  
for tearing apart the trapper's net,  
so we could flutter away like birds.

**C: Our help is the Lord,  
creator of earth and sky.**

Second Reading 1 Peter 4:12-19

Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that is taking place among you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. <sup>13</sup>But rejoice in so far as you are sharing Christ's sufferings, so that you may also be glad and shout for joy when his glory is revealed. <sup>14</sup>If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the spirit of glory, which is the Spirit of God, is resting on you. <sup>15</sup>But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, a criminal, or even as a mischief-maker. <sup>16</sup>Yet if any of you suffers as a Christian, do not consider it a disgrace, but glorify God because you bear this name. <sup>17</sup>For the time has come for judgement to begin with the household of God; if it begins with us, what will be the end for those who do not obey the gospel of

God? <sup>18</sup>And

‘If it is hard for the righteous to be saved,  
what will become of the ungodly and the sinners?’

<sup>19</sup>Therefore, let those suffering in accordance with God’s will entrust themselves to a faithful Creator, while continuing to do good.

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

**C: Thanks be to God.**

*Gospel Acclamation (Matthew 5:10)*

**C: Alleluia. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Alleluia.**

*Gospel Reading Matthew 2:13-23*

*The gospel is announced:*

P: The holy gospel according to St. Matthew the 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter.

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

Now after [the Wise Men] had left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, ‘Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.’ <sup>14</sup>Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt, <sup>15</sup>and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfil what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, ‘Out of Egypt I have called my son.’

When Herod saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, he was infuriated, and he sent and killed all the children in and around Bethlehem who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had learned from the wise men. <sup>17</sup>Then was fulfilled what had been spoken through the prophet Jeremiah:

<sup>18</sup> ‘A voice was heard in Ramah,

wailing and loud lamentation,

Rachel weeping for her children;

she refused to be consoled, because they are no more.’

<sup>19</sup>When Herod died, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, <sup>20</sup>“Get up, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who were seeking the child’s life are dead.” <sup>21</sup>Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel. <sup>22</sup>But when he heard that Archelaus was ruling over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And after being warned in a dream, he went away to the district of Galilee. <sup>23</sup>There

he made his home in a town called Nazareth, so that what had been spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled, “He will be called a Nazorean.”

*After the reading:*

P: The gospel of the Lord

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

### Children's Sermon

#### Sermon

#### Hymn of the Day What Child Is This?

*(For music turn to Hymn 296 in the Red Hymnal)*

1. **What Child is this, who, laid to rest,  
On Mary's lap is sleeping?  
Whom angels greet with anthem sweet  
While shepherds watch are keeping?  
This, this is Christ the king,  
Whom shepherds guard and angels sing,  
Haste, haste to bring him laud,  
The babe, the son of Mary!**
  
2. **Why lies he in such mean estate  
Where ox and ass are feeding?  
Good Christian, fear; for sinners here  
The silent Word is pleading.  
Nails, spear shall pierce him through,  
The cross be borne for me, for you;  
Hail, hail the Word made flesh,  
The babe, the son of Mary!**
  
3. **So bring him incense, gold, and myrrh;  
Come, peasant, king, to own him.  
The King of kings salvation brings;  
Let loving hearts enthrone him.  
Raise, raise the song on high,  
The virgin sings her lullaby;  
Joy, joy, for Christ is born,  
The babe, the son of Mary!**

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.

## Offertory 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.**

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: The triune God,  
glorious Mystery,  
holy Incarnate One,  
abiding Comforter,  
bless you with endless grace, peace, and joy.

**C: Amen.**

Sending Hymn It Came upon the Midnight Clear

*For music turn to Hymn 282 in the Red Hymnal*

- 1. It came upon the midnight clear,  
that glorious song of old,  
from angels bending near the earth  
to touch their harps of gold:  
“Peace on the earth, good will to all,  
from heav’n’s all-gracious king.”  
The world in solemn stillness lay  
to hear the angels sing.**
- 2. Still through the cloven skies they come  
with peaceful wings unfurled,**

and still their heav'nly music flows  
o'er all the weary world.

Above its sad and lowly plains  
they bend on hov'ring wing,  
and ever o'er its babel sounds  
the blessed angels sing.

3. And you, beneath life's crushing load,  
whose forms are bending low,  
who toil along the climbing way  
with painful steps and slow:  
look now, for glad and golden hours  
come swiftly on the wing;  
oh, rest beside the weary road  
and hear the angels sing.

4. For lo! The days are hast'ning on,  
by prophets seen of old,  
when with the ever circling years  
shall come the time foretold,  
when peace shall over all the earth  
its ancient splendors fling,  
and all the world give back the song  
which now the angels sing.

Text: Edmund H. Sears, 1810-1876. Music: Richard S. Willis, 1819-1900

*Dismissal*

P: Go in peace. Serve the Lord.

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

I, THE FOURTH WISE MAN,  
BRING FRUITCAKE.



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MEIR &  
STAHLER.

12/26

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*You two quit it or I'm turning  
this caravan right around!*

**Worship assistants TODAY:**

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

**Worship assistants for next Sunday, January 4, 2026**

Greeters and Ushers     Janice Lockwood  
Acolyte                     Alyssa Young  
Altar Care                 Linda Flood  
Communion Assistant     Linda Flood  
Counters  
Coffee Hour

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**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