

# *The Third Sunday of Advent*

## *Sunday, December 17, 2023*

St. Paul's Lutheran Church  
215 N. Warren St.  
Orwigsburg, PA  
570-366-2316

[www.stpauls-orwigsburg.org](http://www.stpauls-orwigsburg.org)

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### GATHERING

#### PRELUDE

"People, Look East"

J. Westenkuehler

#### THE LIGHTING OF THE THIRD ADVENT CANDLE

Blessed be God, Father, ☩ Son, and Holy Spirit, whose forgiveness is sure, and whose steadfast love endures forever. **Amen.**

We praise you, O God, for this victory wreath that marks our days of preparation for Christ's advent. As we light the candles on this wreath, strengthen our hearts as we await the Lord's coming in glory. Enlighten us with your grace, that we may serve our neighbors in need. Grant this through Christ our Lord, whose coming is certain and whose day draws near. **Amen.**

#### "We Are Waiting for Jesus"

*[Three candles are lit.]*

1 We are wait - ing for Je - sus; Je - sus brings peace.

We are wait - ing for Je - sus; Je - sus brings peace.

Sun of jus - tice, shine up-on us; we are trust - ing in your prom-ise.

We are wait - ing for Je - sus; Je - sus brings peace.

The image shows a musical score for the hymn "We Are Waiting for Jesus". It consists of four staves of music in G major (one sharp). The lyrics are written below the notes. The first staff begins with a '1' indicating the first line of the hymn. The music is written in a simple, accessible style with many ties and rests, suggesting it is a congregational hymn. The lyrics are: '1 We are wait - ing for Je - sus; Je - sus brings peace.', 'We are wait - ing for Je - sus; Je - sus brings peace.', 'Sun of jus - tice, shine up-on us; we are trust - ing in your prom-ise.', and 'We are wait - ing for Je - sus; Je - sus brings peace.'

## CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

Let us now confess our sins.

*Silence is kept for reflection.*

O God of love and forgiveness,

**we confess that we have lost our way and are captive to sin.**

**We have neither welcomed the stranger, nor loved our neighbor.**

**We have not shared your good gifts with those in need.**

**Open our hearts and hands,**

**that we may be reconciled and renewed by the light of Christ. Amen.**

Know that through Jesus Christ your sins are forgiven,

and that you are freed to live as children of God.

**Amen.**

## GATHERING HYMN “On Jordan’s Bank the Baptist’s Cry”

[See back of bulletin]

## 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.**

## KYRIE

**A** In peace, let us pray to the Lord. **G** Lord, have mer - cy.

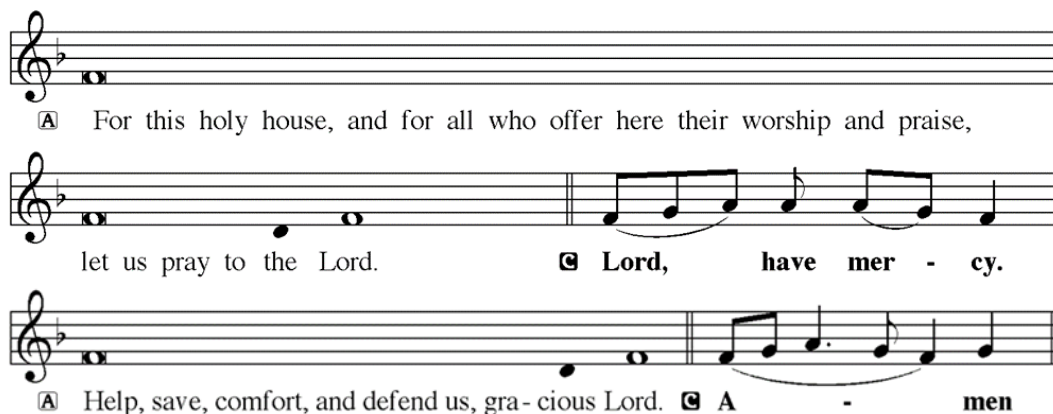
**A** For the peace from above, and for our salvation, let us pray to the Lord.

**G** Lord, have mer - cy.

**A** For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the Church of God,

and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord.

**G** Lord, have mer - cy.



## PRAYER OF THE DAY

Stir up the wills of your faithful people, Lord God, and open our ears to the words of your prophets, that, anointed by your Spirit, we may testify to your light; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

## WORD

### A READING FROM ISAIAH

<sup>1</sup>The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me,  
because the LORD has anointed me;  
he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed,  
to bind up the brokenhearted,  
to proclaim liberty to the captives,  
and release to the prisoners;  
<sup>2</sup>to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor,  
and the day of vengeance of our God;  
to comfort all who mourn;  
<sup>3</sup>to provide for those who mourn in Zion—  
to give them a garland instead of ashes,  
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,  
the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit.  
They will be called oaks of righteousness,  
the planting of the LORD, to display his glory.  
<sup>4</sup>They shall build up the ancient ruins,  
they shall raise up the former devastations;  
they shall repair the ruined cities,  
the devastations of many generations.

<sup>8</sup>For I the LORD love justice,  
I hate robbery and wrongdoing;  
I will faithfully give them their recompense,  
and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.  
<sup>9</sup>Their descendants shall be known among the nations,  
and their offspring among the peoples;  
all who see them shall acknowledge  
that they are a people whom the LORD has blessed.  
<sup>10</sup>I will greatly rejoice in the LORD,  
my whole being shall exult in my God;  
for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation,  
he has covered me with the robe of righteousness,  
as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland,  
and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.  
<sup>11</sup>For as the earth brings forth its shoots,  
and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up,  
so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise  
to spring up before all the nations. (Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11)

The Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

**PSALM 126 (Read responsively)**

<sup>1</sup>When the LORD restored the fortunes of Zion,  
we were like those who dream.  
<sup>2</sup>**Then our mouth was filled with laughter,  
and our tongue with shouts of joy;  
then it was said among the nations,  
"The LORD has done great things for them."**  
<sup>3</sup>The LORD has done great things for us,  
and we rejoiced.  
<sup>4</sup>**Restore our fortunes, O LORD,  
like the watercourses in the Negeb.**  
<sup>5</sup>May those who sow in tears  
reap with shouts of joy.  
<sup>6</sup>**Those who go out weeping,  
bearing the seed for sowing,  
shall come home with shouts of joy,  
carrying their sheaves.**

## A READING FROM FIRST THESSALONIANS

<sup>6</sup>Rejoice always, <sup>17</sup>pray without ceasing, <sup>18</sup>give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. <sup>19</sup>Do not quench the Spirit. <sup>20</sup>Do not despise the words of prophets, <sup>21</sup>but test everything; hold fast to what is good; <sup>22</sup>abstain from every form of evil.

<sup>23</sup>May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>24</sup>The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this. (1 Thessalonians 5:16-24)

The Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

## GOSPEL ACCLAMATION



## GOSPEL

The Holy Gospel according to St. John.

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

<sup>6</sup>There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. <sup>7</sup>He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. <sup>8</sup>He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light.

<sup>19</sup>This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, “Who are you?” <sup>20</sup>He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, “I am not the Messiah.” <sup>21</sup>And they asked him, “What then? Are you Elijah?” He said, “I am not.” “Are you the prophet?” He answered, “No.” <sup>22</sup>Then they said to him, “Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?” <sup>23</sup>He said,

“I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness,

‘Make straight the way of the Lord,’ ”

as the prophet Isaiah said.

<sup>24</sup>Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. <sup>25</sup>They asked him, “Why then are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?” <sup>26</sup>John answered them, “I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, <sup>27</sup>the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal.” <sup>28</sup>This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.

(John 1:6-8, 19-28)

The Gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, O Christ.**

# **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

## **SERMON**

**HYMN OF THE DAY** “Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus”  
[See back of bulletin]

### **THE NICENE CREED (Read in Unison)**

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;  
by the power of the Holy Spirit  
he became incarnate from the virgin Mary, and was made man.  
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.  
With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified,  
He 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.

## PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

With hope and expectation, we offer our prayers for the church, the world, and all who await God's day of restoration.

*A brief silence.*

Fill our mouths with shouts of joy as we bear witness to the great things you have done. Give your church a spirit of gladness as we gather and as we are sent.

Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Protect forests, orchards, rainforests, and all wooded areas from disease and wasteful destruction. Keep us grateful for all benefits we receive from your great and good creation. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Grant wisdom and compassion to those who work for public safety and all who work within prisons, jails, and courts, that as kindness and mercy grows, hatred and violence may lessen. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Teach us to share with all who are in need. Keep us mindful of our neighbor's need for available housing, nourishing food, stable employment, and adequate health care. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Bless leaders in church and society in their task of proclamation. May the voices of those who advocate for those who are ignored or marginalized be held and valued. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

We rejoice in the saints who lived lives which witnessed to your justice, truth, and love. Through them, teach us always to hold fast to what is good, even when it is difficult to do so. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

*(Pastor concludes):* Listen to these and all our prayers, O God of hosts, and restore us with your great and everlasting mercy. **Amen.**

## PEACE

The peace of the Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

## OFFERING

**OFFERTORY (8 AM)** "O Thou That Tellest Good Tidings"

G. F. Handel

**ANTHEM (10:30 AM)**

"Prophets Knew"\*

L. Larson

## OFFERTORY HYMN



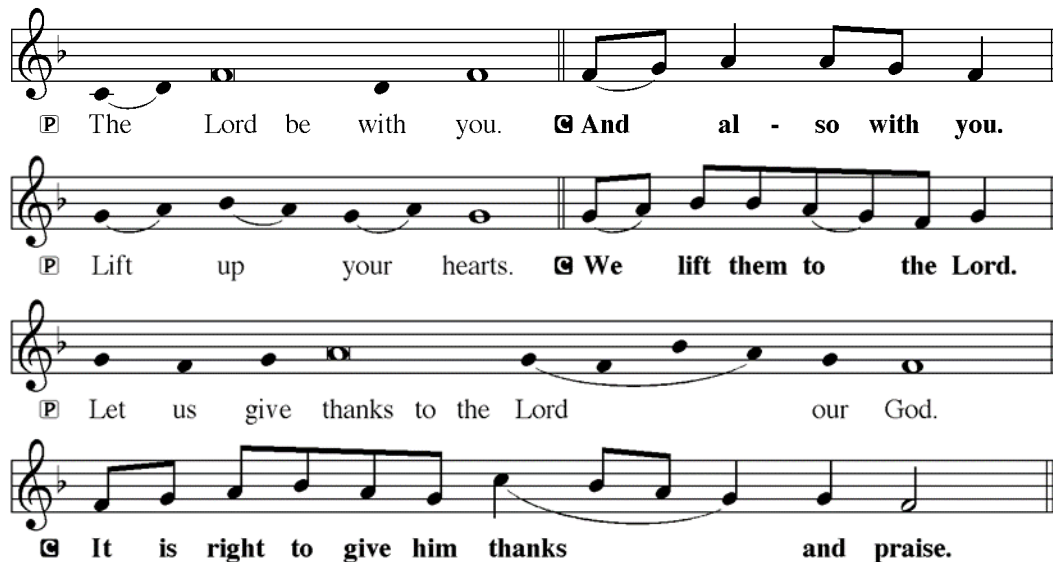
Cre-ate in me a clean heart, O God, and re-new a right  
spir-it with-in me. Cast me not a-way from your pres-ence, and take  
not your Ho-ly Spir-it from me. Re-store to me the joy of  
your sal-va-tion, and up-hold me with your free Spir-it.

## OFFERTORY PRAYER

God of abundance and new life, we bring before you the fruits of your creation, and with them we offer our very lives. Teach us patience, renew our hope, and help us to care for those in need, until the coming of your Son, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

## MEAL

## GREAT THANKSGIVING

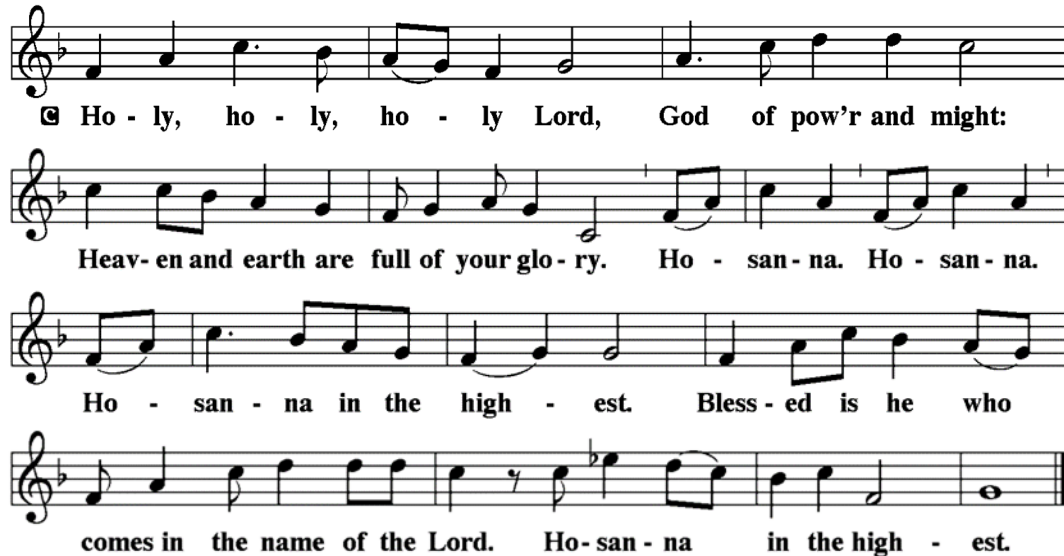


Ⓟ The Lord be with you. ☩ And al-so with you.  
Ⓟ Lift up your hearts. ☩ We lift them to the Lord.  
Ⓟ Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.  
☩ It is right to give him thanks and praise.



It is indeed right and salutary that we should at all times and in all places offer thanks and praise to you, O Lord, holy Father, almighty and ever living God. You comforted your people with the promise of the Redeemer, through whom you will also make all things new in the day when he comes again to judge the world in righteousness. And so, with the Church on earth and the hosts of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

## SANCTUS



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

Blessed are you, Lord of heaven and earth.

In mercy for our fallen world, you gave your only Son,

that all those who believe in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

We give thanks to you

for the salvation you have prepared for us through Jesus Christ.

Send now your Holy Spirit into our hearts,

that we may receive our Lord with a living faith

as he comes to us in his holy supper.

**Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.**

In the night in which he was betrayed,

our Lord Jesus took bread, and 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.

## **THE 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.

## **INSTRUCTIONS**

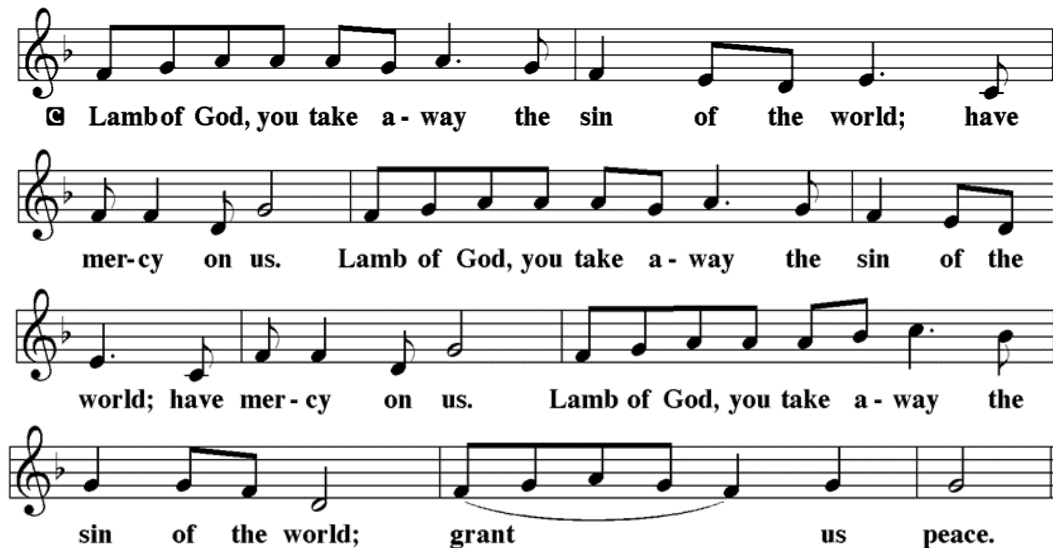
*All who are baptized and seek forgiveness of their sins and the promise of eternal life in Jesus Christ are welcome to receive the Sacrament of Holy Communion by intinction. Communicants may dip a wafer of bread (the Body of Christ) into a chalice of wine (the Blood of Christ) before consuming it. After you have received the Sacrament, you may choose to briefly stand at the chancel rail before returning to your seat.*

*If you or your child would like to receive a blessing rather than the Sacrament, please come forward and say, "A blessing," or cross your arms over your chest.*

*Those who are unable to come forward should indicate that they wish to receive the Sacrament and they will receive it as they sit in their pew.*

*Communion is shared with those seated on the pulpit side and then the lectern side.*

## AGNUS DEI



## COMMUNION HYMN “Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence” (10:30 AM) [See back of bulletin]

### TABLE BLESSING

The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in his grace. **Amen.**

### PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Almighty God, you have invited us to feast with you and with one another in this holy meal. Nourished now in body and spirit, send us forth from this table to proclaim your presence, even as we await the glorious coming of Christ our Savior. **Amen.**

## SENDING

### BLESSING

May the blessing of Almighty God, the Father, the ☩ Son, and the Holy Spirit, be with you now and forever. **Amen.**

### SENDING HYMN

“People Look East”  
[See back of bulletin]

### THE DISMISSAL

Go now in peace. Prepare the way of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

### POSTLUDE

“Christians, Be Joyful”

J. S. Bach

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**Altar flowers** are presented in loving memory of Harry W. Lafko by his family.

**Bulletins** are presented in memory of my parents, Guy and Frances Lengel by son, James and the Lengel family.

**Anthem** "Prophets Knew\*" was presented in honor of Joshua Clarke on his Confirmation by his parents and sister (1997). Additional copies were purchased in memory of Ed Kriner, Dick Teets, Duke Schenck, and Bob Wolfe by Kathie Frantz, Cindy Ritschel, Sue Schenck, and Wendy Schuld.

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**Introduction to the day:** Isaiah and the Psalmist make clear that God is turning our mourning into laughter and shouts of joy. "Rejoice always," begins our reading from 1 Thessalonians. "All God's children got a robe," go the words of a spiritual. We receive our "party clothes" in baptism, and in worship we gather wearing such clothing in preparation for God's coming party.

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<b>THIS WEEK AT ST. PAUL'S</b>
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Sunday, December 17	8:00 AM	Worship with Holy Communion
	9:15 AM	Adult Forum
	10:30 AM	Worship with Holy Communion
	4:00 PM	Christmas Concert

Wednesday, December 20	6:00 PM	Bell Choir (Small Group)
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Saturday, December 23	5:30 PM	Worship
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Sunday, December 24	9:30 AM	Worship with Holy Communion
	5:00 PM	Candlelight and Holy Communion
	9:00 PM	Candlelight and Holy Communion

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**SERVING THIS SUNDAY (12/17/23)**

**8:00 AM**

GREETER: Krista Harding; USHER: Pastor Mike; LECTOR: Connie Teter  
COMMUNION ASST.: Connie Teter

**10:30 AM**

GREETER: Wayne Lutsey; USHER: David Kriner; LECTOR: Tom Wehr  
COMMUNION ASST.: Wayne Lutsey

ALTAR GUILD: Tina Butler and Chris Long

COUNTERS: Joyce O'Rourke, Gloria Dierwechter, and Pat Davis

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## **SERVING NEXT SUNDAY (12/24/23)**

**9:30 AM**

GREETER: TBD; USHER: Chris Long; LECTOR: Tina Butler

COMMUNION ASST.: Chris Long

ALTAR GUILD: Joanne Emerich and Gwen Wehr

COUNTERS: Connie Teter, Joanne Emerich, and Barb Sterner

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## **SERVING CHRISTMAS EVE (12/24/23)**

**5:00 PM**

GREETER: TBD; USHERS: Hadley, Kate, and Danika Bolinsky, Glenda Bright;

LECTOR: Deb Bolinsky

COMMUNION ASST.: Kay Weidensaul and Ruth Ann Withers

**9:00 PM**

GREETER: Wayne Lutsey and Tina Butler; USHER: Karen and Maddie Travor;

LECTOR: Samantha Clarke; COMMUNION ASSISTANT: Greg Sklar

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## **MIDDLE EAST CRISIS**

The ELCA and Lutheran Disaster Response has a history of providing support for our partners in the Middle East. Your donations designated for “Middle East Crisis” will be used entirely (100%) to provide support to those whose lives have been impacted in the region. Gifts may be given by check to St. Paul’s Lutheran Church with the memo line “Middle East Crisis.” Cash donations should also indicate that the donation is for the “Middle East Crisis.”

## **CHRISTMAS CONCERT**

Our annual Christmas Concert will be held on TODAY, Sunday, December 17 at 4:00 p.m. The program includes traditional carols, music by St. Paul’s Handbell Choir, Chancel Choir, and instrumentalists. Join us for light refreshments and fellowship following the concert.

## **ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING SET**

Our annual congregational meeting will be on Sunday February 18, 2024, immediately following the 10:30 a.m. worship service. In case of inclement weather (or other emergency), our annual meeting may be held on the following Sunday at the same time. Please mark your new calendar for this important meeting!

## GATHERING HYMN “On Jordan’s Bank the Baptist’s Cry”

1 On Jor - dan's bank the Bap - tist's cry an - nounc - es  
2 Then cleansed be ev - 'ry life from sin; make straight the  
3 We hail you as our Sav - ior, Lord, our ref - uge  
4 Stretch forth your hand, our health re - store, and make us  
5 All praise to you, e - ter - nal Son, whose ad - vent

that the Lord is nigh; a - wake and heark - en,  
way for God with - in, and let us all our  
and our great re - ward; with - out your grace we  
rise to fall no more; oh, let your face up -  
has our free - dom won, whom with the Fa - ther

for he brings glad tid - ings of the King of kings!  
hearts pre - pare for Christ to come and en - ter there.  
waste a - way like flow'rs that with - er and de - cay.  
on us shine and fill the world with love di - vine.  
we a - dore, and Ho - ly Spir - it, ev - er - more.

## CHRISTMAS EVE AND NEW YEAR'S EVE

Because Christmas Eve falls on a Sunday this year, on Sunday, December 24, our congregation will worship together at a single 9:30 a.m. worship service, rather than at 8:00 and 10:30 a.m. Later that day, we will gather to celebrate Christmas Eve with candle lighting and carols at 5:00 and 9:00 p.m. (rather than 10:00 p.m.) Holy Communion will also be shared at each service. No worship is scheduled on Monday, December 25, Christmas Day.

On Sunday, December 31, New Year's Eve, we will worship together at a single 9:30 a.m. worship service (rather than at 8:00 and 10:30 a.m.). Please mark your calendars!

## HYMN OF THE DAY “Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus”

1 Come, thou long - ex - pect-ed Je - sus, born to set thy peo-ple free;  
2 Born thy peo - ple to de - liv - er, born a child and yet a king,

from our fears and sins re - lease us; let us find our rest in thee.  
born to reign in us for - ev - er, now thy gra - cious king-dom bring.

Is - rael's strength and con - so - la - tion, hope of all the earth thou art;  
By thine own e - ter - nal Spir - it rule in all our hearts a - lone;

dear De - sire of ev - ery na - tion, Joy of ev - ery long-ing heart.  
by thine all - suf - fi - cient mer - it raise us to thy glo - rious throne.

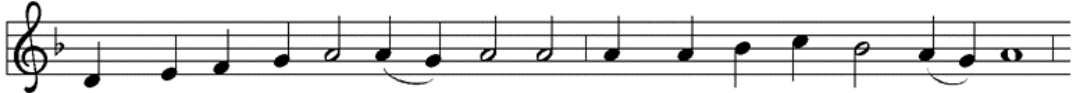
### “SECOND SUNDAY” SUNDAY SCHOOL

Our next Second Sunday School class will take place on January 14, 2024! Children ages 1-10 are welcome to come upstairs during the 10:30 AM service for Bible stories, fun, fellowship, and a snack. Students ages 11 to 18 are invited to join me between the services (9:15 - 10:15 a.m.) for a teen Sunday School group.


Please contact Sarah Eger with questions or to volunteer. (570) 394-3522 (cell)  
[swoodring86@hotmail.com](mailto:swoodring86@hotmail.com).




## COMMUNION HYMN “Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence”



1 Let all mor - tal flesh keep si - lence, and with fear and trem - bling stand;  
2 King of kings, yet born of Mar - y, as of old on earth he stood,  
3 Rank on rank the host of heav - en spreads its van-guard on the way;  
4 At his feet the six - winged ser - aph, cher - u - bim with sleep - less eye,



pon - der noth - ing earth - ly - mind - ed, for with bless - ing in his hand  
Lord of lords in hu - man ves - ture, in the bod - y and the blood,  
as the Light of light, de - scend - ing from the realms of end - less day,  
veil their fac - es to the pres - ence, as with cease - less voice they cry:



Christ our God to earth de - scend - ing comes full hom - age to de - mand.  
he will give to all the faith - ful his own self for heav'n - ly food.  
comes, the pow'rs of hell to van - quish, as the dark - ness clears a - way.  
“Al - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia, Lord Most High!”

### ATTENTION: ALL COMMITTEE LEADERS

Your year-end reports for 2023 will be needed by Sunday, January 7, 2024. Please have them completed, proofread, and ready for print by the deadline date. Email your file(s) to: [office@stpauls-orwigsburg.org](mailto:office@stpauls-orwigsburg.org).

### LOOKING FOR A CHURCH HOME?

Take a copy of our monthly newsletter. Check out our webpage. Visit us on Facebook. Watch our weekly video on YouTube. Get to know us better! We are a Lutheran congregation with a rich tradition, but we are not old-fashioned.

Everyone is invited to worship and work together here to the glory of God. For more information, please contact our church office at 570-366-2316, Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to 12 noon.

### SHARE YOUR INFORMATION

If you have names and addresses of members who can no longer join us for worship (e.g., homebound, college students, military personnel, recently moved), please call Connie Teter (at 570-366-0255) or contact any member of the Evangelism Committee. Cards of support and encouragement signed by church members can lift the spirits of those who cannot worship with us in person.



# SENDING HYMN

## “People Look East”

1 Peo - ple, look east. The time is near of the crown - ing  
2 Fur - rows, be glad. Though earth is bare, one more seed is  
3 Stars, keep the watch. When night is dim, one more light the  
4 An - gels an - nounce with shouts of mirth him who brings new

of the year. Make your house fair as you are a - ble,  
plant - ed there. Give up your strength the seed to nour - ish,  
bowl shall brim, shin - ing be - yond the frost - y weath - er,  
life to earth. Set ev - 'ry peak and val - ley hum - ming

trim the hearth and set the ta - ble. Peo - ple, look  
that in course the flour - ish. Peo - ple, look  
bright as sun and moon to - geth - er. Peo - ple, look  
with the word, the Lord is com - ing. Peo - ple, look

east, and sing to - day— Love, the Guest, is on the way.  
east, and sing to - day— Love, the Rose, is on the way.  
east, and sing to - day— Love, the Star, is on the way.  
east, and sing to - day— Love, the Lord, is on the way.

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