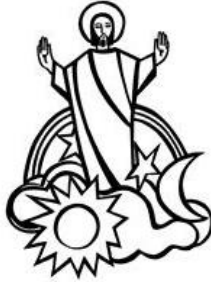


Lutheran Church of the Holy Comforter

• 216 N. Main Street • Belmont, NC 28012 • Sunday, December 3, 2023 •

First Sunday of Advent



WELCOME/GATHERING

PRELUDE: *O Little One Sweet*

Chamber Choir

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

*All may make the sign of the cross, the sign marked at baptism,
as the presiding minister begins.*

P Blessed be the holy Trinity, ☩ one God, who opens the heavens and draws near to us with salvation.

C Amen.

P God is patient and merciful, desiring all to come to repentance. Trusting this promise of grace, let us confess our sin.

Silence is kept for reflection.

P Everlasting God,

C you love justice and you hate wrongdoing. We confess the fear, greed, and self-centeredness that make us reluctant to work against oppression. We are complicit in systems of exploitation. We choose comfort over courage. We are careless with creation's bounty. Look upon us with mercy. Turn our hearts again to you. Make us glad to do your will and to walk in your ways for the sake of our waiting world.

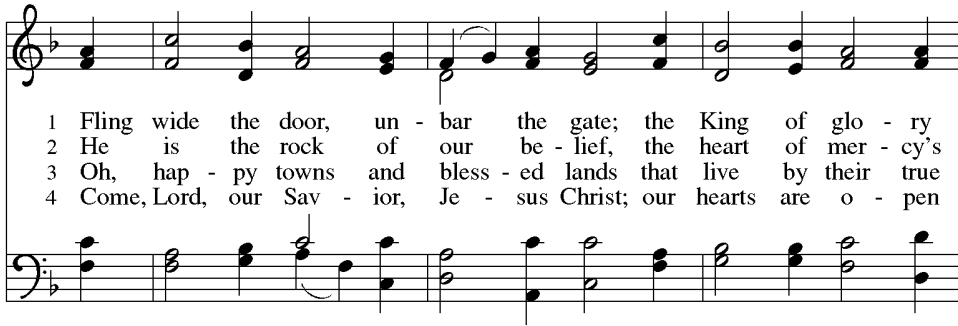
Amen.

P Hear these words of assurance: God clothes you with garments of salvation and covers you with robes of righteousness. In the tender compassion of ☩ Jesus Christ, your sins are forgiven. God's covenant is eternal, and God's blessing rests upon us all.

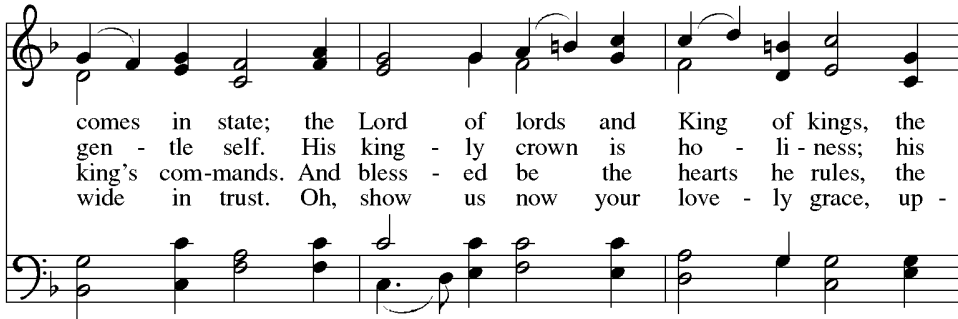
C Amen.

GATHERING SONG: *Fling Wide the Door*

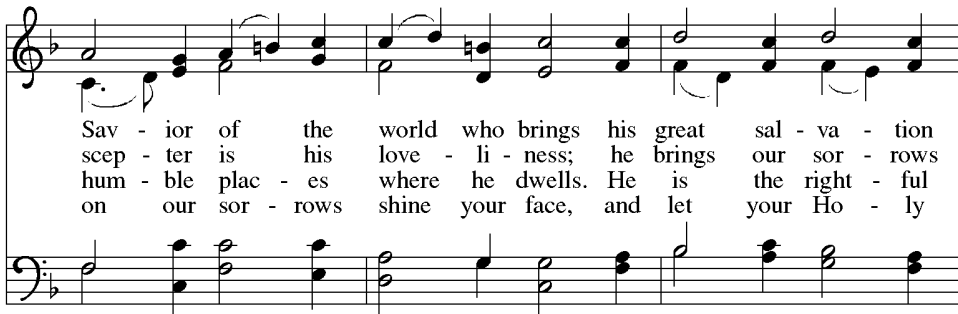
All Stand & Sing



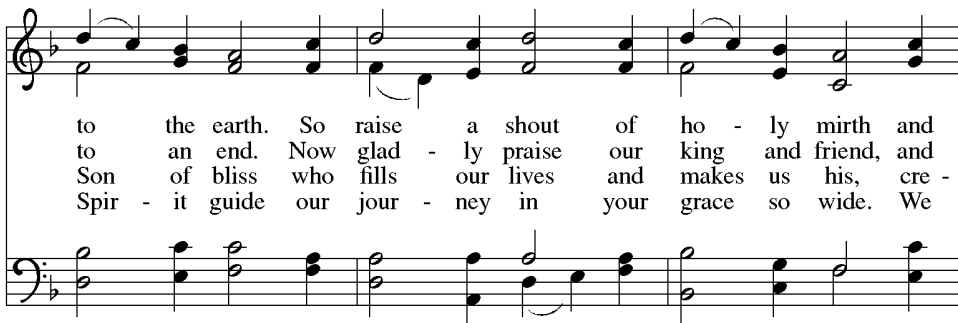
1 Fling wide the door, un - bar the gate; the King of glo - ry
2 He is the rock of our be - lief, the heart of mer - cy's
3 Oh, hap - py towns and bless - ed lands that live by their true
4 Come, Lord, our Sav - ior, Je - sus Christ; our hearts are o - pen



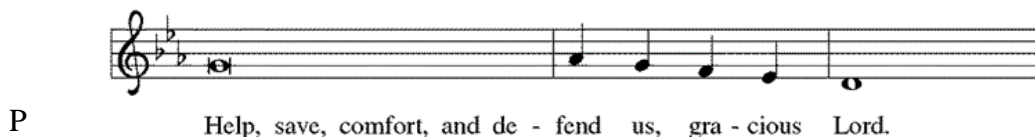
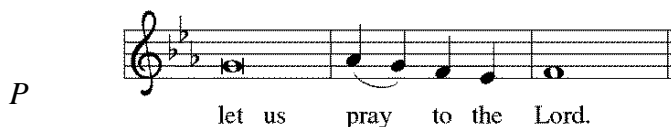
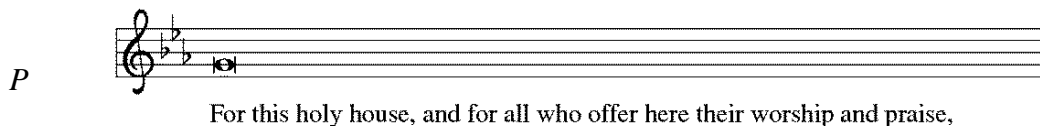
comes in state; the Lord of lords and King of kings, the
gen - tle self. His king - ly crown is ho - li - ness; his
king's com-mands. And bless - ed be the hearts he rules, the
wide in trust. Oh, show us now your love - ly grace, up -



Sav - ior of the world who brings his great sal - va - tion
scep - ter is his love - li - ness; he brings our sor - rows
hum - ble plac - es where he dwells. He is the right - ful
on our sor - rows shine your face, and let your Ho - ly

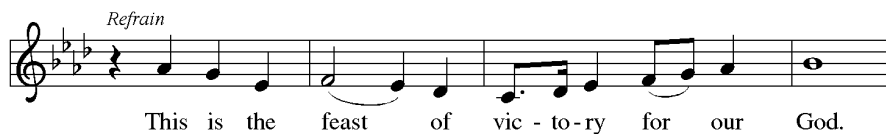


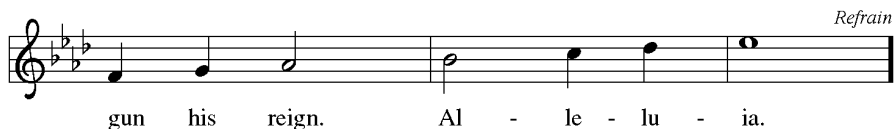
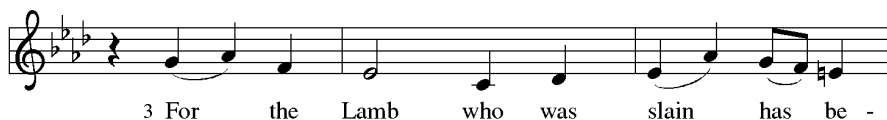
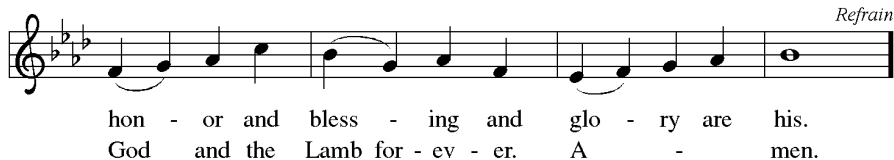
to the earth. So raise a shout of ho - ly mirth and
to an end. Now glad - ly praise our king and friend, and
Son of bliss who fills our lives and makes us his, cre -
Spir - it guide our jour - ney in your grace so wide. We



CANTICLE OF PRAISE

All Sing





SALUTATION

P The Lord be with you.

C And also with you.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

P Stir up your power, Lord Christ, and come. By your merciful protection awaken us to the threatening dangers of our sins, and keep us blameless until the coming of your new day, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C Amen.

CHILDREN'S SERMON

We invite children to come forward for a children's message before moving to children's church.

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH: *Light one Candle*

All Sing

1 Light one can-dle to watch for Mes-si - ah: let the light ban-ish dark - ness.
He shall bring sal - va - tion to Is - ra-el, God ful - fills the prom - ise.

FIRST READING

Isaiah 64:1-9

A reading from Isaiah, the sixty-fourth chapter.

This lament comes from a people who have had their hopes shattered. The visions of a rebuilt Jerusalem and a renewed people of God, spoken of in Isaiah 40–55, have not been realized. Instead, the people experience ruin, conflict, and famine. This lament calls God to account—to be the God who has brought deliverance in the past.

¹O that you would tear open the heavens and come down, so that the mountains would quake at your presence— ²as when fire kindles brushwood and the fire causes water to boil— to make your name known to your adversaries, so that the nations might tremble at your presence! ³When you did awesome deeds that we did not expect, you came down, the mountains quaked at your presence. ⁴From ages past no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you, who works for those who wait for him. ⁵You meet those who gladly do right, those who remember you in your ways. But you were angry, and we sinned; because you hid yourself we transgressed. ⁶We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy cloth. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away. ⁷There is no one who calls on your name, or attempts to take hold of you; for you have hidden your face from us, and have delivered us into the hand of our iniquity. ⁸Yet, O LORD, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand. ⁹Do not be exceedingly angry, O LORD, and do not remember iniquity forever. Now consider, we are all your people.

A The word of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

SECOND READING

1 Corinthians 1:3-9

A reading from 1 Corinthians, the first chapter.

As the Christians in Corinth await the advent of Jesus, Paul reminds them how the Lord has already enriched them through spiritual gifts and will continue to strengthen them until the coming day of the Lord.

³Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

⁴I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus, ⁵for in every way you have been enriched in him, in speech and knowledge of every kind—⁶just as the testimony of Christ has been strengthened among you—⁷so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁸He will also strengthen you to the end, so that you may be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹God is faithful; by him you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

A The word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

All Stand & Sing

Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia,

al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

Repeat alleluia

Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of e - ter - nal life.

GOSPEL

Mark 13:24-37

P The holy gospel according to St. Mark, the thirteenth chapter.

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

Jesus encourages his followers to look forward to the day when he returns in power and glory to end all suffering.

[Jesus said:] ²⁴“In those days, after that suffering, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, ²⁵and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. ²⁶Then they will see ‘the Son of Man coming in clouds’ with great power and glory. ²⁷Then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven. ²⁸“From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. ²⁹So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. ³⁰Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. ³¹Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. ³²“But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. ³³Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come. ³⁴It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. ³⁵Therefore, keep awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, ³⁶or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. ³⁷And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake.”

P The gospel of the Lord.

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

The assembly is seated.

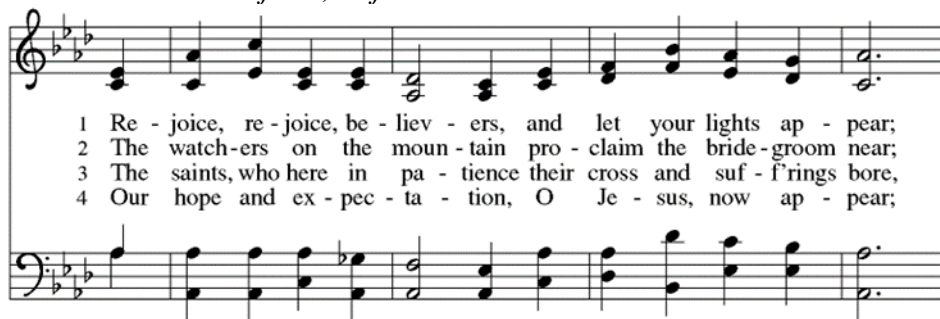
SERMON

Deacon Beka

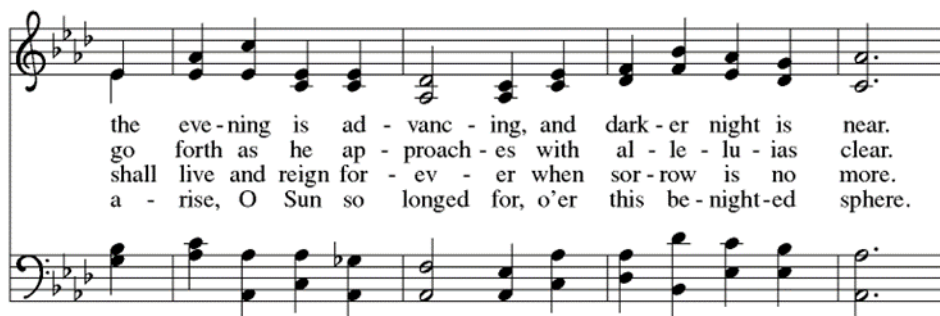
Silence is Kept for Reflection.

HYMN OF THE DAY: *Rejoice, Rejoice Believers*

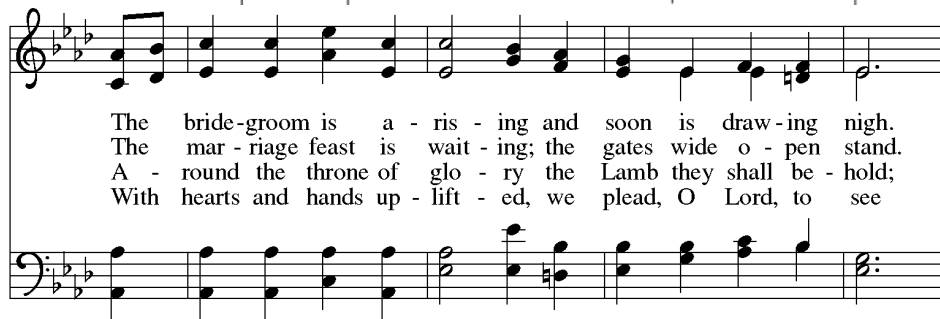
All Stand & Sing



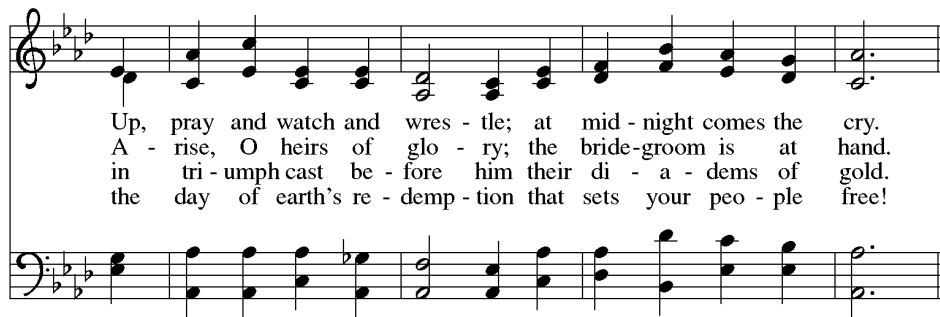
1 Re - joice, re - joice, be - liev - ers, and let your lights ap - pear;
 2 The watch-ers on the moun - tain pro - claim the bride-groom near;
 3 The saints, who here in pa - tience their cross and suf - f'ings bore,
 4 Our hope and ex - pec - ta - tion, O Je - sus, now ap - pear;



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!

Text: Laurentius Laurenti, 1660–1722; tr. Sarah B. Findlater, 1823–1907
 Music: HAF TRONES LAMPA FÄRDIG, Swedish folk tune

APOSTLES CREED

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

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.

Call your church into holy fellowship as we await the restoration of all things. Reenergize your faithful people to live with hope and compassion, especially those who serve as missionaries near and far. Center us on your promise to come among us and make all things new. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

All creation signals your presence, O God: the vastness of the cosmos, the turn of the seasons, and living things that both rest and flourish. Rekindle our commitment to care for the earth. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

Let the nations tremble at your holy presence, that justice and liberation prevail in all corners of the earth. Restore peace to nations in conflict, teach righteousness to corrupt leaders and systems, and bring stability to areas facing uncertain futures. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

Enrich the spirits of all who feel hopeless, fearful, or despairing. Stay close to those who await healing or relief. Deliver all in any need. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

Be with those who keep awake at night: nurses working overnight shifts, caregivers of newborns and aging adults, stargazers, those who are anxious, or those who are traveling. Reveal to all that the dark can be a place of calm and comfort filled with your presence.

Merciful God,

receive our prayer.

You have sent out your angels and gathered your faithful people from every time and place, calling them into one fellowship of saints. Bless the witness of those who dwell in your eternal presence. Merciful God,

receive our prayer.

Listen to these and all our prayers, O God of hosts, and restore us with your great and everlasting mercy.

Amen.

PEACE

P The peace of Christ be with you always.

C **And also with you.**

OFFERTORY ANTHEM: *Longing For the Light*

Church Choir

OFFERTORY RESPONSE: *Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus* All Stand and Sing



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 - 'ry na - tion, joy of ev - 'ry long-ing heart.
by thine all - suf - fi - cient mer - it raise us to thy glo - rious throne.

OFFERING PRAYER

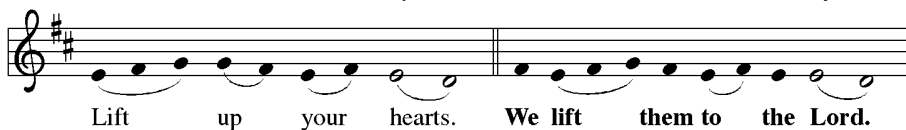
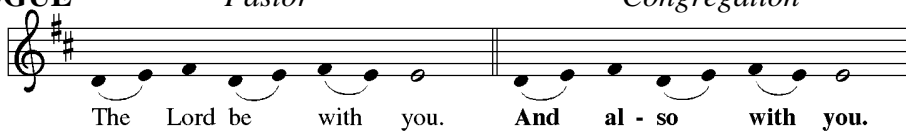
A Let us pray.

C God our provider, by your merciful hand abundance springs up from the earth. Receive and bless these gifts of your own bounty. Let them be a sign of your steadfast love and faithfulness for all people, through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

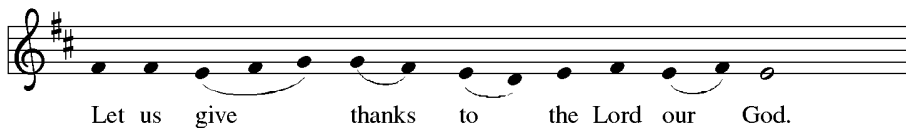
DIALOGUE

Pastor

Congregation



Pastor



Cong.

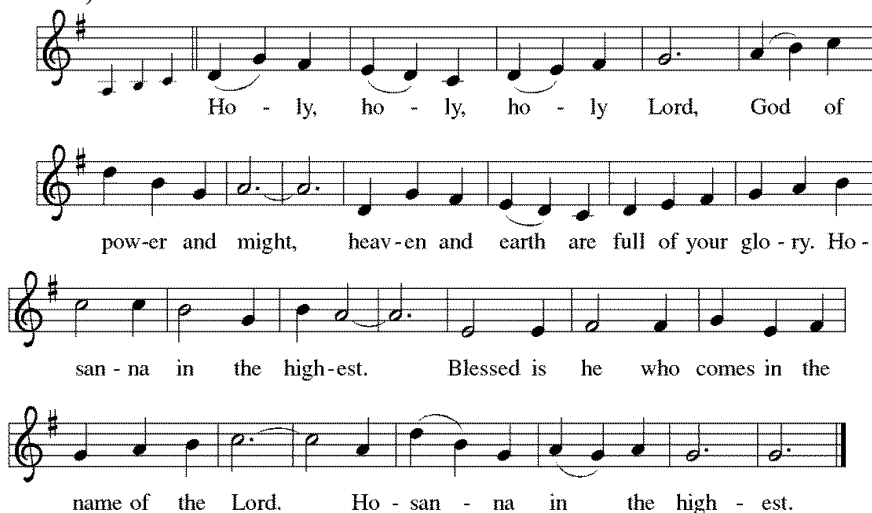


PREFACE

P ...we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

HOLY, HOLY, HOLY

All Sing



THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE

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.**



INVITATION TO COMMUNION

P In this meal, righteousness and peace meet together. Come, take your place at the table.

C Thanks be to God.

COMMUNION

During communion the congregation is invited forward by rows, beginning in the back, and will receive the bread and wine at the front of the aisle. You may either eat and drink then, or return to your seat to do so, and place the cups in the bin in your pew.

LAMB OF GOD

.All Sing

Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the world; have

mer - cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the

world; have mer - cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a -

way the sin of the world; grant us peace, grant us peace.

MUSIC DURING COMMUNION: *O Lord, How Shall I Meet You*

All Sing

1 O Lord, how shall I meet you, how wel - come you a - right?
 2 I lay in fet - ters, groan - ing; you came to set me free.
 3 Love caused your in - car - na - tion; love brought you down to me.
 4 Re - joice, then, you sad - heart - ed, who sit in deep - est gloom,

Your peo - ple long to greet you, my hope, my heart's de - light!
 I stood, my shame be - moan - ing; you came to hon - or me.
 Your thirst for my sal - va - tion pro - cured my lib - er - ty.
 who mourn your joys de - part - ed and trem - ble at your doom.

Oh, kin - dle, Lord most ho - ly, your lamp with - in my breast
 A glo - rious crown you give me, a trea - sure safe on high
 Oh, love be - yond all tell - ing, that led you to em - brace
 All hail the Lord's ap - pear - ing! O glo - rious Sun, now come,

to do in spir - it low - ly all that may please you best.
 that will not fail or leave me as earth - ly rich - es fly.
 in love, all love ex - cel - ling, our lost and fall - en race.
 send forth your beams so cheer - ing and guide us safe - ly home.

Text: William Kewell, b. 1925, st. 1-3; Gilbert E. Dear Jr., b. 1950, st. 4, ab.; w. Margaret D. Miller, b. 1937, st. 1-3, ab.
 Music: A. V. A. H. William Kewell, abp.
 Reprint: 1. Used from O Lambeth World Federation (st. 1-4 and more st. 4); © 1972 Contemporary Worship, 4, st. 1-3, ab. 4, st. 1-3, ab.

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

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

A Lord Jesus,

C in this simple meal you have set a banquet. Sustain us on the journey, strengthen us to care for the least of your beloved children, and give us glad and generous hearts as we meet you on the way. Amen.

BLESSING

P The God of peace bless you, the love of Christ sustain you in hope, and the anointing of the Spirit ✠ remain upon you now and forever.

C Amen.

CLOSING HYMN: *People, Look East*

All Stand & Sing



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 flow'r may 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.

Text: Horatio G. Spafford, 1828–1888
Music: VILLE DU HAVRE, Philip P. Bliss, 1838–1876

SENDING

P Go in peace. Keep awake.

C Thanks be to God.

POSTLUDE: *Let the Earth Now Praise the Lord*

Manz

*Thank you to our lector, Brian Achor.

* The altar flowers were given by Julia Gunter in honor of the Church Council Members.

*Soloists: Cheryl Bansen and Tim Wilson.

This Weeks Schedule:

Sunday, December 3rd

9:30 am – Sunday School

10:10 am – Church Choir

10:30 am – Worship

4:00 pm – Advent Exhibit

4:00 pm – Adult Handbells

4:45 pm – Church Choir

5:00 pm – Youth Handbells

Wednesday, December 6th

5:30 pm- Youth Handbells

6:00 pm –Advent Dinner

6:45 pm - Unfailing Light Worship

7:17 pm – Chamber Choir

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