# Lutheran Church of the Holy Comforter

• 216 N. Main Street • Belmont, NC 28012 • Sunday, December 24, 2023 • 10:30am

Nativity of our Lord



# WELCOME/GATHERING

PRELUDE: Pastorale from Prologue de Jesus

Suzanne Fairbairn

# THANKSGIVING FOR THE WORD

P Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace, Wonderful Counselor, at the birth of time your Word brought light into the world, and throughout the ages, you proclaim newness of life.

C For your wondrous Word, we thank you, O God.

P In the fullness of time, your Word became flesh, to shine in our world's darkness, to speak peace to all people, and to welcome us as members of your family.
C For your loving Word, we adore you, O God.

P Grant us now the gift of your Spirit, that held, nourished, and protected by your Word, we may live as your children,

bearing your goodness throughout the world.

C For your powerful Word, we praise you, O God.

P All glory to you, holy God, now and forever.

### C Amen.



Text: James Montgomery, 1771–1854, alt., sts. 1–3; Salisbury Hymn Book, 1857, st. 4 Music: REGENT SQUARE, Henry T. Smart, 1813–1879

### GREETING

P The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, Emmanuel, God with us, the love of God the Father Almighty, and the communion of the Holy Spirit living among us be with you all.

### C And also with you.



### SALUTATION

- P The Lord be with you.
- C And also with you.

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

### P Let us pray.

Almighty God, you made this holy time shine with the brightness of the true Light. Grant that here on earth we may walk in the light of Jesus' presence and in the last day wake to the brightness of his glory; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you 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.

### FIRST READING

### 2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16

A reading from the seventh chapter of Samuel.

Instead of David building a house (temple) for God, God promises to establish David's house (dynasty) forever. Centuries later, after the Babylonian exile, no king sat on the throne. Even then, however, the people of Israel remembered this promise and continued to hope for a king, the messiah, God's anointed.

<sup>1</sup>Now when the king was settled in his house, and the LORD had given him rest from all his enemies around him, <sup>2</sup>the king said to the prophet Nathan, "See now, I am living in a house of cedar, but the ark of God stays in a tent." <sup>3</sup>Nathan said to the king, "Go, do all that you have in mind; for the LORD is with you."

<sup>4</sup>But that same night the word of the LORD came to Nathan: <sup>5</sup>Go and tell my servant

David: Thus says the LORD: Are you the one to build me a house to live in? <sup>6</sup>I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent and a tabernacle. <sup>7</sup>Wherever I have moved about among all the people of Israel, did I ever speak a word with any of the tribal leaders of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, "Why have you not built me a house of cedar?" <sup>8</sup>Now therefore thus you shall say to my servant David: Thus says the LORD of hosts: I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep to be prince over my people Israel; <sup>9</sup>and I have been with you wherever you went, and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. <sup>10</sup>And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may live in their own place, and be disturbed no more; and evildoers shall afflict them no more, as formerly, <sup>11</sup>from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel; and I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover the LORD declares to you that the LORD will make you a house. <sup>16</sup>Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me; your throne shall be established forever.

- A The word of the Lord.
- C Thanks be to God.

LESSON ANTHEM: Sing We and Chant It

### SECOND READING

A reading from the sixteenth chapter of Romans.

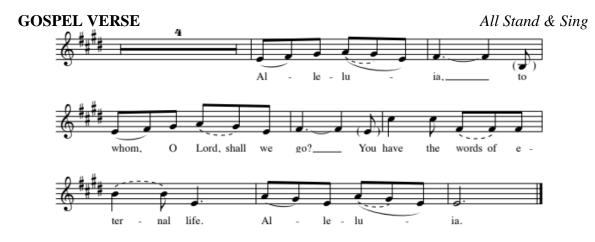
Paul closes his letter to the Romans by praising God because, in the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ, God has revealed the promised, divine plan of salvation for all humanity. Paul proclaims this gospel of Christ in order to bring about the obedience of faith among all nations.

<sup>25</sup>Now to God who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages <sup>26</sup>but is now disclosed, and through the prophetic writings is made known to all the Gentiles, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith—<sup>27</sup>to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever! Amen.

- A The word of the Lord.
- C Thanks be to God.

Chamber Choir

Romans 16:25-27



Text: Evangelical Lutheran Worship, based on John 6:68 and Psalm 119:41-42; copyright © 2006, admin. Augsburg Fortress

#### GOSPEL

Luke 1:26-38, 46b-55

- P The holy gospel according to St. Luke, the first chapter.
- C Glory to you, O Lord.

In this annunciation, Luke makes clear that God comes with good news for ordinary people from little known places. This king will not be born to royalty in a palace, but to common folk in a stall. Here Luke highlights the role of the Spirit, a special emphasis in this gospel.

<sup>26</sup>In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, <sup>27</sup>to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. <sup>28</sup>And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." <sup>29</sup>But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. <sup>30</sup>The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. <sup>31</sup>And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. <sup>32</sup>He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. <sup>33</sup>He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." <sup>34</sup>Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" <sup>35</sup>The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. <sup>36</sup>And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. <sup>37</sup>For nothing will be impossible with God." <sup>38</sup>Then Mary

said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

<sup>46b</sup>My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,<sup>47</sup>my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

<sup>48</sup>for you, Lord, have looked with favor on your lowly servant. From this day all generations will call me blessed:

<sup>49</sup>you, the Almighty, have done great things for me and holy is your name.

<sup>50</sup>You have mercy on those who fear you, from generation to generation.

<sup>51</sup>You have shown strength with your arm and scattered the proud in their conceit,

<sup>52</sup>casting down the mighty from their thrones and lifting up the lowly.

<sup>53</sup>You have filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty.

<sup>54</sup>You have come to the aid of your servant Israel, to remember the promise of mercy,

<sup>55</sup>the promise made to our forebears, to Abraham and his children forever.

P The gospel of the Lord.

C Praise to you, O Christ.

The assembly is seated.

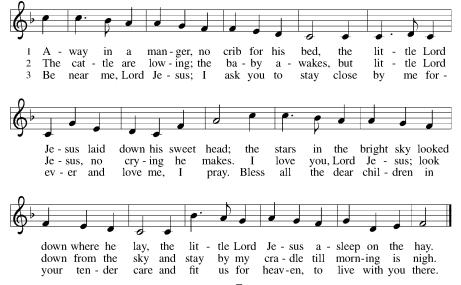
#### SERMON

Deacon Beka

Silence is kept for reflection.

#### **HYMN OF THE DAY:** *Away in a Manger*

All Stand & Sing



### **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 forgiveness of sins,

the resurrection of the body,

and the life everlasting. Amen.

### PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Trusting in God's good news of great joy for all people, we offer our prayers for ourselves, our neighbors, and the world God loves.

### A brief silence.

Glory to you, God, for the song of the angels, proclaiming to the world Christ's holy birth. Give your church a joyful song to sing, that we bring the good news of peace and salvation to all people. Hear us, O God.

### Your mercy is great.

Glory to you, God, for the stars that shine your light in the world. Provoke awe in our hearts at the expansive mystery of the cosmos. Open us to find beauty in the clear darkness of night and in the first glimmers of dawn. Hear us, O God.

### Your mercy is great.

Glory to you, God, for the child born to us who establishes a kingdom of justice and righteousness. Break bonds of oppression, bring reconciliation to warring lands, and establish peace from this time onward and forevermore. Hear us, O God.

### Your mercy is great.

Glory to you, God, for Mary's loving care. Lead us to tend to one another in time of need. Share the comfort of your presence with all people who are alone or separated from loved ones due to estrangement, incarceration, or illness. Hear us, O God.

### Your mercy is great.

Glory to you, God, for the faithfulness of the shepherds in their vocation. Grant rest to any who feel exhausted from their work during this season: retail and restaurant workers, church musicians, administrative staff, and clergy, organizers of charitable-giving events, and service workers doing essential tasks. Hear us, O God.

#### Your mercy is great.

Glory to you, God, for the multitude of the heavenly host. We rejoice in the zeal of all your saints who have witnessed the appearing of your grace, and who reveal to us your salvation for all. Hear us, O God.

#### Your mercy is great.

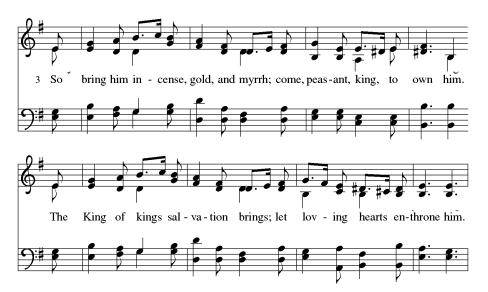
Abide with us, O God of mercy, and receive our prayers according to your abundant grace. **Amen.** 

#### PEACE

- P The peace of Christ be with you always.
- C And also with you.

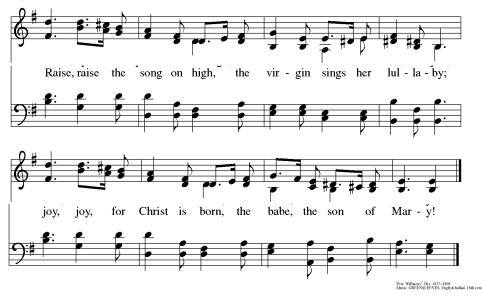
#### **OFFERTORY ANTHEM:** Carols of Hope

#### **OFFERTORY RESPONSE:** What Child is This



Church Choir

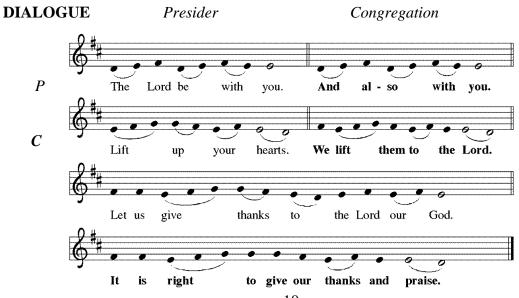
All Stand & Sing



### **OFFERING PRAYER**

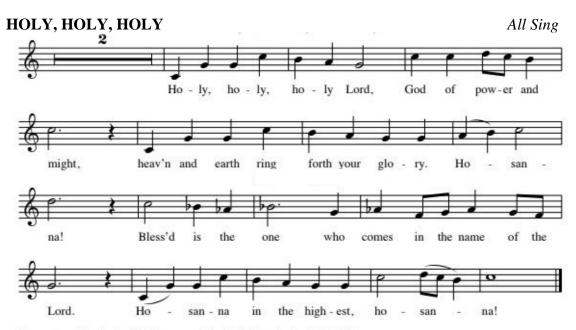
A Let us pray.

C God of abundance, receive and bless these gifts we have offered. Join our hearts with the song of the angels, and gather us at your table of celebration. Strengthen us to share with all the world the abundance of your grace upon grace, poured out in Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh. Amen.



#### PREFACE

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



Text prepared by the English Language Liturgical Consultation, 1988, (alt.) Music: Aaron David Miller © 2013 Augsburg Fortress. All rights reserved.

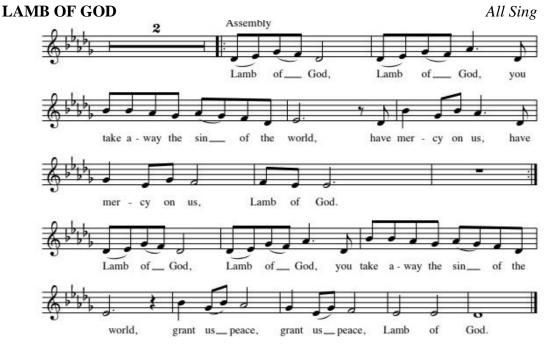
#### LORD'S PRAYER

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 Glory to God in the highest! Come to the table of peace.
- C Thanks be to God.





### COMMUNION

For communion, you will come up the aisle, take a cup at the front pew, and then follow the line around the altar rail. You'll kneel if able, then receive the bread and eat. The wine will be poured into your cup as you hold it, and you may drink it then. Everyone will be dismissed together and you'll walk back to your pew the way came.

### MUSIC DURING COMMUNION: A Christmas Carol Church Choir

While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks

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

Chamber Choir

# PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

A Let us pray.

C God our redeemer, you have fed us at this table with gifts of grace, truth, and life. As you have gathered us in joy, send us forth as messengers of your peace. Make us shine with the good news of your glory, born to us in Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

# THE CHRISTMAS GOSPEL

### Luke 2:1-14

L In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. To us is born a Savior.

# C Jesus Christ our Lord.

L Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. To us is born a Savior.

# C Jesus Christ our Lord.

L While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. To us is born a Savior.

# C Jesus Christ our Lord.

L In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. To us is born a Savior.

# C Jesus Christ our Lord.

L But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." To us is born a Savior.

# C Jesus Christ our Lord.

L And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!" To us is born a Savior.

# C Jesus Christ our Lord.

L When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. To us is born a Savior.

### C Jesus Christ our Lord.

L When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. To us is born a Savior.

# C Jesus Christ our Lord.

L The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them. To us is born a Savior.

C Jesus Christ our Lord.

# CANDLELIGHTING

The pastor will light his candle from the large Christ Candle, which symbolizes Christ, the light of the world. With the assistance of the acolyte, the light will be passed throughout the congregation.

CANDLELIGHTING CAROL: Silent Night ...... All Sing

(Raise your candle at "Christ, the Savior is born" and "Jesus, Lord at your birth.")

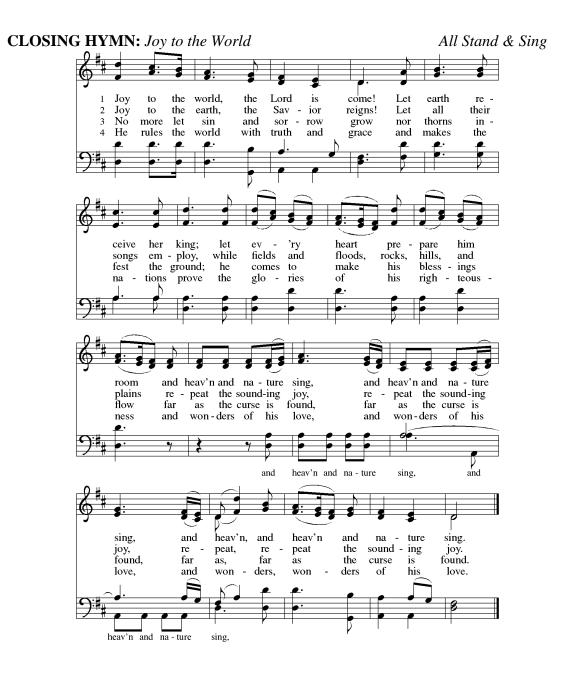
- Silent night, holy night! All is calm, all is bright Round yon virgin mother and child. Holy Infant, so tender and mild, Sleep in heavenly peace, Sleep in heavenly peace.
- 2. Silent night, holy night! Shepherds quake at the sight; Glories stream from heaven afar, Heav'nly hosts sing, alleluia! Christ, the Savior, is born! Christ, the Savior, is born!
- 3. Silent night, holy night! Son of God, love's pure light Radiant beams from your holy face, With the dawn of redeeming grace, *Jesus, Lord, at your birth, Jesus, Lord, at your birth.*



# BLESSING

P God bless you and keep you, + Jesus grant you grace and truth, and the Spirit send peace upon your hearts, now and forever.

C Amen.



Text: Isaac Watts, 1674–1748 Music: ANTIOCH, English melody, 18th cent.; arr. Lowell Mason, 1792–1872

### SENDING

P Christ the Savior is born! Go in peace. Proclaim this good news.

C Thanks be to God.

# **POSTLUDE:** Hallelujah Chorus

Handel

\*Special thanks to our Lector, William Charnock.

\* The altar flowers were given by Julia Gunter in honor of Greg Cline and all church musicians for their time, talent and dedication to our music ministry and given by Shelia Kelly to honor and glorify Christ Jesus' birth.

\*Thank you to our dedicated tellers for their hard work every Sunday, with recognition this month to John Koehler and Jill Cassel.

\*Prelude and Postlude: Suzanne Fairbairn

# This Week's Schedule:

Sunday, December 24<sup>th</sup> 10:10 am – Church Choir 10:30 am – Christmas Eve Worship 11:00 pm – Christmas Candlelit Service (Prelude starting at 10:45pm)

**Tuesday, December 26<sup>th</sup>** 7:00 pm – Nar-Anon Meeting

# Sunday, December 31st

10:10 am – Church Choir 10:30 am – Worship Service

All classes and music activities will resume on January 7<sup>th</sup>.



# POINSETTIAS FOR CHRISTMAS 2023

TO THE GLORY OF GOD: John & Leslie Crist

#### IN HONOR OF:

Shirley Causby in honor of Greg Cline Micah Kearney in honor of Saints of Holy Comforter Julia Gunter in honor of The Altar Guild Greg Cline in honor of Shirley Causby Greg Cline in honor of Faye and Warren Heller John & Leslie Crist in honor of our grandchildren: Wyatt & Brooklyn Suttenfield, Max & Oliva McCotter, Patrick & Jacob Crist Carole Jolley in honor of Pastor Micah, Jenn and boys Leigh & Shari Leverenz in honor of Emmaleigh and Jackson Bears Mark & Anne Reese in honor of Barbara Reese, Sarah Reese and Cailtan and Andrew Killian. Ashley Hyman in honor of the Hyman Family Mark & Rebecca Yount in honor of Luke & Alec Via

#### IN MEMORY OF:

Donna Bean in memory of Fave H. Bean Jim and Jan Buel in memory of Bob Haubenreich Jim, Jan, Alex and Garrett Buell in memory of Carmen Buell Shirley Causby in memory of Tommy Causby Dr. & Mrs. Raul & JoAnne de la Vega in memory of Dr. & Mrs. Raul E. de la Vega Dr. & Mrs. Raul & JoAnne de la Vega in memory of Dr. & Mrs. William Kannapel Carole Jolley in memory of her parents, PG & Sybil Jolley Shelia and Tim Kelly in memory of Robert and Mary Kelly Shelia and Tim Kelly in memory of Kenny and Alma Hedrick Debbie Mendez in memory of Maria and Andres Mendez, Sr. Debbie Mendez in memory of Alice and Mark Lyerly Debbie Mendez in memory of Ruth Lyerly Mark & Ann Reese in memory of Jim Reese and Shirley and Jim Robertson Mark & Rebecca Yount in memory of Heather Yount Mark & Rebecca Yount in memory of Paul and Judy Outlaw and John and Myra Yount Sarah Monahan Moler in memory of James F Melton III Greg Byrum in memory of Mr. Olin S Byrum Jr. Greg Byrum in memory of Mrs. Amy Byrum McKay Susan and Don Nelson in loving memory of our son, Charles Grafton and our daughter, Adrielle Goodwin

If we have unintentionally made any errors or failed to include a mention, please contact the church office. Thank you!