

# *Lutheran Church of the Holy Comforter*

216 N. Main Street • Belmont, NC 28012 • Sunday, December 10, 2023

*23rd Sunday after Pentecost*



## **WELCOME/GATHERING**

**PRELUDE:** *Coventry Carol*

Handbell 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: Awake! Awake, and Greet the New Morn All Stand & Sing



1 A - wake! A - wake, and greet the new morn, for  
 2 To us, to all in sor - row and fear, Em -  
 3 In dark - est night his com - ing shall be, when  
 4 Re - joice, re - joice, take heart in the night, though



an - gels her - ald its dawn - ing. Sing out your joy, for  
 man - u - el comes a - sing - ing, his hum - ble song is  
 all the world is de - spair - ing, as morn - ing light so  
 dark the win - ter and cheer - less, the ris - ing sun shall



soon he is born, be - hold! the Child of our long - ing.  
 qui - et and near, yet fills the earth with its ring - ing;  
 qui - et and free, so warm and gen - tle and car - ing.  
 crown you with light, be strong and lov - ing and fear - less.



Come as a ba - by weak and poor, to bring all hearts to -  
 mu - sic to heal the bro - ken soul and hymns of lov - ing -  
 Then shall the mute break forth in song, the lame shall leap in  
 Love be our song and love our prayer and love our end - less



geth - er, he o - pens wide the heav'n - ly door and  
 kind - ness, the thun - der of his an - thems roll to  
 won - der, the weak be raised a - bove the strong, and  
 sto - ry; may God fill ev - 'ry day we share and



lives now in - side us for - ev - er.  
 shat - ter all ha - tred and blind - ness.  
 weap - ons be bro - ken a - sun - der.  
 bring us at last in - to glo - ry.

Text: Julia Ward Howe, 1819–1910  
 Music: BATTLE HYMN, North American, 19th cent.

## GREETING

**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.

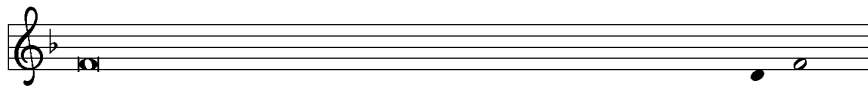
## KYRIE

*Leader*

*Congregation*

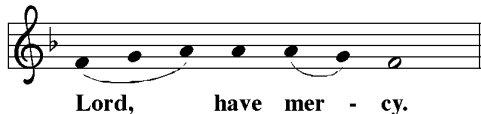


*L*



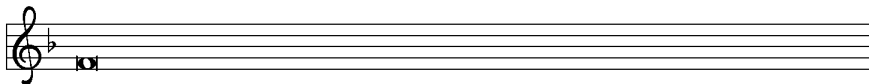
For the peace from above, and for our salvation, let us pray to the Lord.

*C*

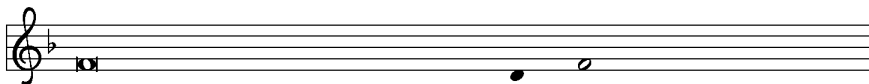


Lord, have mer - cy.

*L*



For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the church of God,



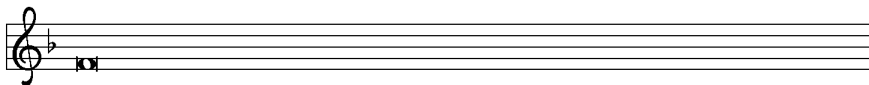
and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord.

*C*

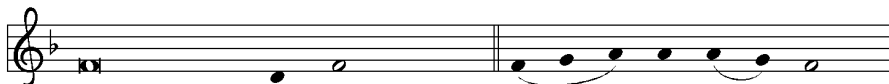


Lord, have mer - cy.

*L*

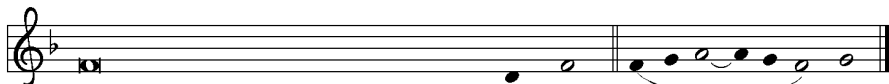


For this holy house, and for all who offer here their worship and praise,



let us pray to the Lord.

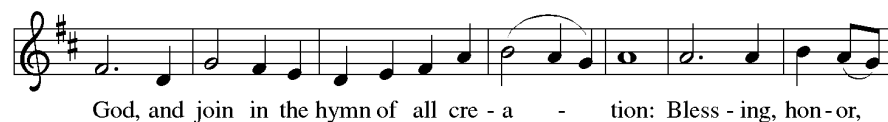
Lord, have mer - cy.



Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gra - cious Lord. A - men.

# THIS IS THE FEAST

*All Sing*





## SALUTATION

**P** The Lord be with you.

**C** And also with you.

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

**P** Stir up our hearts, Lord God, to prepare the way of your only Son. By his coming strengthen us to serve you with purified lives; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and 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.*

## LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH: *Light Two Candles*

All Sing



2 Light two can-dles to watch for Mes-si - ah: let the light ban-ish dark - ness.



He shall feed the flock like a shep-herd, gent - ly lead them home-ward.

## FIRST READING

Isaiah 40:1-11

A reading from the fortieth chapter of Isaiah.

*In grand, flowing, poetic lines, the prophet announces that the exile of God's people in Babylon is over. God will deliver Israel and will care for her as a shepherd cares for the sheep. This word can be trusted, because the only enduring reality in life is the word of God.*

<sup>1</sup>Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God. <sup>2</sup>Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that she has served her term, that her penalty is paid, that she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins. <sup>3</sup>A voice cries out: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. <sup>4</sup>Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. <sup>5</sup>Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

<sup>6</sup>A voice says, "Cry out!" And I said, "What shall I cry?" All people are grass, their constancy is like the flower of the field. <sup>7</sup>The grass withers, the flower fades, when the breath of the LORD blows upon it; surely the people are grass. <sup>8</sup>The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of our God will stand forever. <sup>9</sup>Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good tidings; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings, lift it up, do not fear; say to the cities of Judah, "Here is your God!" <sup>10</sup>See, the Lord GOD comes with might, and his arm rules for him; his reward is with him, and his recompense before him. <sup>11</sup>He will feed his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead the mother sheep.

L The word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

## SECOND READING

## 2 Peter 3:8-15a

A reading from the third chapter of Second Peter.

*This short letter deals with pressing concerns regarding the final advent of Jesus, especially concerns that could arise over its apparent delay. The author of the letter calls on Christians to anticipate the promised coming of the Lord through conduct dedicated to God.*

<sup>8</sup>Do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like one day. <sup>9</sup>The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some think of slowness, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance. <sup>10</sup>But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and everything that is done on it will be disclosed.

<sup>11</sup>Since all these things are to be dissolved in this way, what sort of persons ought you to be in leading lives of holiness and godliness, <sup>12</sup>waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set ablaze and dissolved, and the elements will melt with fire? <sup>13</sup>But, in accordance with his promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness is at home.

<sup>14</sup>Therefore, beloved, while you are waiting for these things, strive to be found by him at peace, without spot or blemish; <sup>15a</sup>and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation.

L The word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

## GOSPEL ACCLAMATION



## GOSPEL

Mark 1:1-8

L The holy gospel according to St. Mark, the first chapter.

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

*The Gospel of Mark does not begin with a story of Jesus' birth but with the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord.*

<sup>1</sup>The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. <sup>2</sup>As it is written in the prophet Isaiah, "See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way; <sup>3</sup>the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,' "

<sup>4</sup>John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. <sup>5</sup>And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. <sup>6</sup>Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. <sup>7</sup>He proclaimed, "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. <sup>8</sup>I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

L The gospel of the Lord.

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

## SERMON

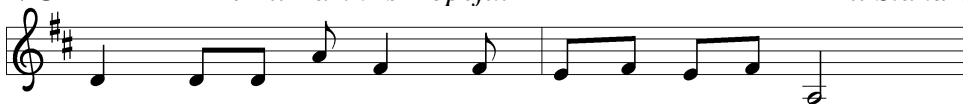
Deacon Beka

*Silence is Kept for Reflection*



# HYMN OF THE DAY: *All Earth Is Hopeful*

*All Stand & Sing*



1 All earth is hope-ful, the Sav-ior comes at last!  
2 Peo-ple of Is-rael, you heard the proph-et tell;  
3 Moun-tains and val-leys will have to be pre-pared;  
4 We first saw Je-sus a ba-by in a crib.



Fur-rows lie o-pen for God's cre-a-tive task: this, the  
"A vir-gin moth-er will bear Em-man-u-el"; she con-  
new high-ways o-pened, new pro-to-cols de-clared. Al-most  
This same Lord Je-sus to-day has come to live in our



la-bor of peo-ple who strug-gle to see how  
ceived him, "God with us," our broth-er, whose birth re-  
here! God is near-ing, in beau-ty and grace! All  
world; he is pres-ent, in neigh-bors we see our



God's truth and jus-tice set ev-'ry-bod-y free.  
stores hope and cour-age to chil-dren of this earth.  
clear ev-'ry gate-way, in haste, come out in haste!  
Je-sus is with us, and ev-er sets us free.

Text: Alberto Tadei, h. 1912, in: *Musicae Fereil Marshall*, h. 1946  
Music: TODA LA TIERRA, Alberto Tadei  
Spanish text and title © 1993 and English text © 1995 Centro de Pastoral Litúrgica, adrian, OCP Publications, 5536 NE Hassalo, Portland, OR 97213.

## 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.*

Send forth your faithful people with words of promise and forgiveness. Teach your church to be bold in revealing your good news in word and in deed. Merciful God,  
**receive our prayer.**

Reveal your majesty in mountain peaks, flowing rivers, and blossoming wilderness roads. Heal the earth where it longs for renewal. Bring wholeness to the earth and all its creatures. Merciful God,  
**receive our prayer.**

Turn the hearts of the nations toward righteousness and peace. Increase cooperation for justice between countries, commonwealths, political parties, and diplomatic leaders. In times of prosperity, direct leaders to be generous for the sake of all. Merciful God,  
**receive our prayer.**

Comfort your people with tender words of love and healing. Surround all who are

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

**Amen.**

## OFFERING PRAYER

P 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

*Leader*

*Congregation*

The Lord be with you. And al - so with you.

Lift up your hearts. We lift them to the Lord.

L Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

C It is right to give our thanks and praise.

## PREFACE

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

## HOLY, HOLY, HOLY

2

Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow - er and

might, heav'n and earth ring forth your glo - ry. Ho - san -

na! Bless'd is the one who comes in the name of the

Lord. Ho - san - na in the high - est, ho - san - na!

## 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 There is a place for you at the banquet. Come and feast at Jesus' table.

C Thanks be to God

### LAMB OF GOD

2 Assembly

Lamb of God, Lamb of God, you

take a-way the sin of the world, have mer-cy on us, have

mer-cy on us, Lamb of God.

Lamb of God, Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the

world, grant us peace, grant us peace, Lamb of 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.*

**MUSIC DURING COMMUNION:** *Savior of the Nations, Come*

*All Sing*



- 1 Sav - ior of the na - tions, come; vir - gin's son, make here your home.
- 2 Not by hu - man flesh and blood, but the mys - tic Breath of God,
- 3 Won-drous birth—oh, won-drous child—from his throne, a vir - gin mild!
- 4 From God's heart the Sav - ior speeds, back to God his path-way leads;



Mar - vel now, O heav'n and earth: God has cho - sen such a birth.  
was the Word of God made flesh, fruit of wom - an, blos - som fresh.  
Ver - y God, and Mar - y's son, ea - ger now his race to run!  
out to van - quish death's com - mand, back to reign at God's right hand.

5 Now your manger, shining bright,  
hallows night with newborn light.  
Night cannot this light subdue;  
let our faith shine ever new.

6 Praise we sing to Christ the Lord,  
virgin's son, incarnate Word!  
To the holy Trinity  
praise we sing eternally!

Text: attr. Ambrose of Milan, 340–397; Martin Luther, 1483–1546; tr. hymnal version  
Music: NUN KOMM, DER HEIDEN HILFEND, J. Walter, *Geistliche Gesangbüchlein*, 1524  
Text © 2006 Augsburg Fortress

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

**C** Amen.

## PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

**P** Let us pray.

**C** Generous God, in bread and cup you have revealed your glory for all people to see together. Nourished by this meal, send us out to proclaim your good news of liberation and release, brought to birth in Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

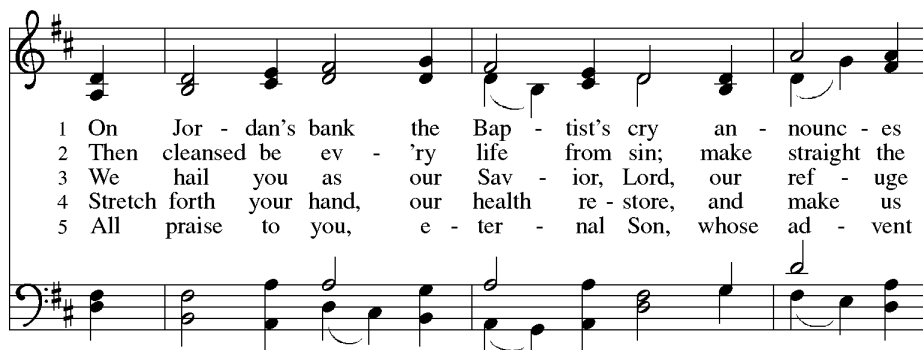
## BLESSING

**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.

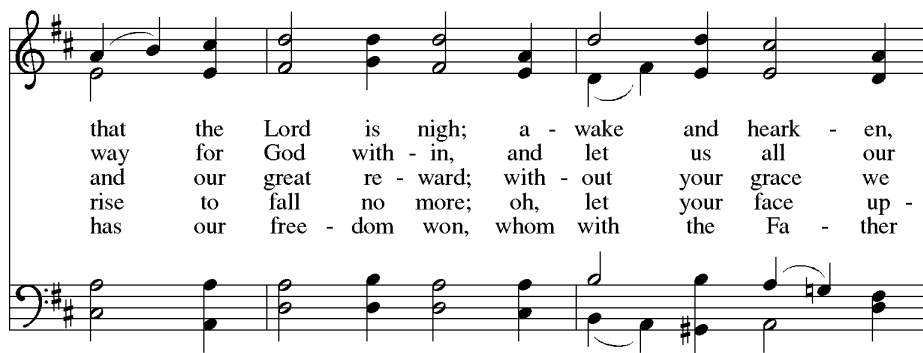
**C** Amen.

# CLOSING HYMN: *On Jordans Bank the Baptist's Cry*

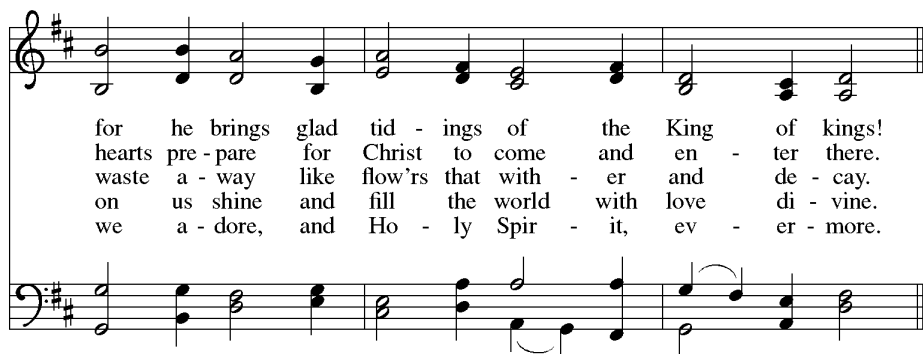
*All Stand & Sing*



1 On Jor - dan's bank the Bap - tist's cry an - nounce - 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.

Text: J. Rippon, *A Selection of Hymns*, 1787, alt.  
 Music: FOUNDATION, Early American

## **SENDING**

**P** Go in peace. Keep awake.

**C** Thanks be to God.

**POSTLUDE:** *Angels, From the Realms of Glory*

Johnson

\*Special thank you to our Lector, Brian Achor.

\*The altar flowers were sponsored by Mark and Anne Reese in honor of their daughter Caitlan's Birthday.

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

### **This Week's Schedule:**

#### **Sunday, December 10th**

9:30 am – Sunday School

9:55am – Handbell Choir

10:10 am – Church Choir

10:30 am – Worship

12:00 pm – Church Council Meeting

4:00 pm – Kids Club

4:00 pm – Small Group 1

5:00 pm -7:30pm – HCY

5:00 pm – Adult Handbells

6:00 pm – Church Choir

#### **Tuesday, December 12th**

7:00 pm – Nar-Anon Meeting

7:00 pm – Small Group 2

#### **Wednesday, December 13th**

5:30 pm – Youth Handbells

6:00 pm – Advent Dinner

6:45 pm – Behold Our Light Worship

7:15 pm – Chamber Choir

#### **Thursday, December 14th**

10:30 am –Prime Timers

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