

Grace Lutheran Church

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Pastor Ken Scheck II
Ms. Cindy Olson, Minister of Music
December 17, 2023

Third Sunday of Advent

December 17, 2023



The season of Advent is a time of preparation for the expected Messiah, who came in an unexpected way, as the baby Jesus. The color of the season is blue (like the night sky), representing the Christ who is called Dayspring (source of day).

Holy Silence is observed as we enter to worship.

Welcome/Worship Instructions

Gathering Music

The CELEBRATION OF LIGHT ON THE ADVENT WREATH - Shepherds Candle

- P** Leap with love, flames of light,
- C** we begin another week of patient preparation for the coming of Jesus Christ.

- A** As candle flames bless us with brilliance on this winter tide,
- C** may our gift-giving be part of our preparation for God's greatest gift, Emmanuel.

- P** Let each present we prepare to give be a sign of God's gift of Life, Joy and Peace to our world.
- C** Let us wrap every Christmas gift with love, so that our gifts become Advent prayers, awakening our hearts to the true mystery of Christmas.

Advent Hymn

"As We Make our Advent Journey"

tune ELW 533

I

As we make our Advent journey,
let us walk as in the Lord.
Pilgrims with a holy calling
trav'ling, strengthened by God's word,
toward the stable, toward the manger,
toward the gift of God made flesh.

II

In the desert, blooms and blossoms
mark the Way of Holiness.
As we travel with rejoicing
strengthen, ransomed, undistressed.
Now restored by water springing,
in the Lord, we new begin.

The RESPONSIVE LITANY of SEEKING

- ☞ With feeble hands and fearful hearts we come into your presence, O Lord, seeking forgiveness.
- ☞ **Like a parched desert we need your streams of joy.**
- ☞ Come, Lord Jesus, into our desert world. Bring the joy and gladness of your forgiveness. Bring the joy and gladness of your presence.
- ☞ **Come to us, Jesus, and strengthen us to do your work.**

Prayer of the Day

- ☞ Let us pray, Stir up the wills of your faithful people, Lord God, and open our ears to the words of your prophets.
- ☞ **Thank you for giving us prophets who are 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**

First Reading

Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11

Though the people had returned to Jerusalem from exile in Babylon, they continued to face hardship and oppression. In the language of the jubilee year described in Leviticus 25, the prophet, moved by the spirit of God, announces deliverance for those who are oppressed and comfort for those who mourn.

📖 A reading from **Isaiah:**

¹The 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; ²to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; ³to 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. ⁴They shall build up the ancient ruins, they shall raise up the former devastations; they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations.

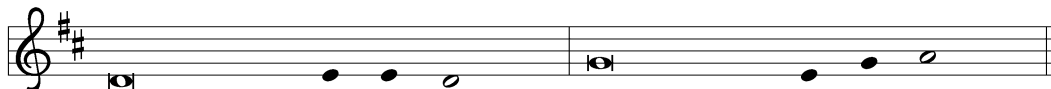
⁸For I the LORD love justice, I hate robbery and wrongdoing; I will faithfully give them their recompense, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them. ⁹Their descendants shall be known among the nations, and their offspring among the peoples; all who see them shall acknowledge that they are a people whom the LORD has blessed. ¹⁰I 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. ¹¹For 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.

📖 The Word of the Lord.

📖 Thanks be to God.

Psalm 126



📖 Refrain



¹When the LORD restored the for- | tunes of Zion,
then were we like | those who dream.

²**Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with | shouts of joy.**
Then they said among the nations, “The LORD has done great | things for them.”

³The LORD has done great | things for us,
and we are | glad indeed.

⁴**Restore our for- | tunes, O LORD,**
like the watercourses | of the Negeb. 📖

⁵Those who | sowed with tears
will reap with | songs of joy.

⁶**Those who go out weeping, carry- | ing the seed,**
will come again with joy, shoulder- | ing their sheaves. 📖

Second Reading

1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

Paul concludes his letter to the Thessalonians by encouraging them to live lives of continual joy, prayer, and thanksgiving. The closing blessing is grounded in the hope of Christ's coming.

📖 A reading from **1 Thessalonians**:

¹⁶Rejoice always, ¹⁷pray without ceasing, ¹⁸give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. ¹⁹Do not quench the Spirit. ²⁰Do not despise the words of prophets, ²¹but test everything; hold fast to what is good; ²²abstain from every form of evil.

²³May 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. ²⁴The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this.

📖 The Word of the Lord.

🙏 Thanks be to God.

Gospel Acclamation

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

ELW 257

Stanza 5 & 6

5 O come, O Key of David, come,
and open wide our heav'nly home;
make safe the way that leads on high,
and close the path to misery. *Refrain*

6 O come, O Dayspring, come and cheer;
O Sun of justice, now draw near.
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
and death's dark shadow put to flight. *Refrain*

Gospel Reading

John 1:6-8, 19-28

John's gospel describes Jesus as the "light of the world." John the Baptist is presented as a witness to Jesus, one who directs attention away from himself to Christ, the true light.

📖 The Holy Gospel, according to **John**.

🙏 **Glory to you, O Lord.**

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

¹⁹This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" ²⁰He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, "I am not the Messiah."

²¹And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the prophet?"

He answered, “No.” ²²Then they said to him, “Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?” ²³He said,

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

‘Make straight the way of the Lord,’ ”

as the prophet Isaiah said.

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

P The Gospel of the Lord.

G Praise to you, O Christ.

Children’s Time

All children [including infants] and youth who desire to come forward for the children’s sermon are welcomed and encouraged to do so. Parents/caregivers are welcome to accompany their child during the children’s message. There may be a time of dance and celebration that is offered.

Message

Silence for reflection

Arise in body or in spirit to sing the hymn.

Song of the Day

I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light

ELW 815

You may sit or kneel for prayer.

Prayers

*We pray the prayer response after each petition. You will hear, **We lift our hearts to you.** The assembly prays, **Come, Lord Jesus.***

A 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.

A Fill our mouths with laughter and our tongues 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. We lift up *Bishops Elizabeth and Craig, Assistants Chrisy and David; our synod companion churches Bethany Lutheran Church, Kaleva; Lifegate Community Church, Hastings; Minister of Music Cindy and Pastor Ken.* We lift our hearts to you,

G **Come, Lord Jesus.**

A Let the trees of the field sing your praise. Protect forests, orchards, rainforests, and all wooded areas from disease and deforestation. Keep us grateful for their gifts of oxygen, food, shade, and shelter. We lift our hearts to you,

C Come, Lord Jesus.

A You love justice and promise your favor to those who are oppressed, brokenhearted, and incarcerated. Grant wisdom and compassion to those who work for public safety and all who work within prisons, jails, and courts, that mercy may increase and violence wither away. Be with those who safeguard the world, including *Parker Stancil (Freedlund)*, *Cody and Myrina Crawford (Clements)*, *Cynthia Rudesill (Hansen)*, *Joel Taggart (Varkula)*, *Julia Ehredt (Schreiner, Halstead)*, and *Seth Domke (Domke)*. We lift our hearts to you,

C Come, Lord Jesus.

A Give us strength to pray for our world without ceasing and provoke us toward love and good deeds for all who are in need *especially*, *Pastor Michael Anton*, *Veronica Baarson*, *Bob Bolton*, *Diana Brown*, *Doug Brown*, *Chris Bush*, *Cherie Clements*, *Kristen Cove*, *Jet Cover*, *Pat DePew*, *Ann and the English Family*, *Lisa Golnek*, *The family of Charlene Hall*, *Lorraine Handsbarger*, *Andy Lamb*, *the family of Norma Ludlow*, *Martha Misak*, *Virginia Moomey*, *James Neiderheiser*, *Lisa Nurenberg*, *Corrina Palmer*, *Shirley Peterson*, *Annette Poholski*, *Jennifer Rohr*, *Mike Shoemaker*, *Jeanette Ulrich*, *Al Throop*, and *Brenda Watson*. Provide for all without adequate housing, food, employment, or access to health care. Empower us as helpers and advocates. We lift our hearts to you,

C Come, Lord Jesus.

A Open our hearts to those who serve as truth-tellers in our church and in our society. Bless leaders in church and society in their task of proclamation. Amplify voices of peacemakers, advocates, and especially those whose voices are ignored or marginalized. We lift our hearts to you,

C Come, Lord Jesus.

A With gratitude we rejoice in the saints (*especially*) who witnessed to your life in all circumstances, in whom your Spirit was not quenched, even in death.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

Through them, teach us always to hold fast to what is good. We lift our hearts to you,

C Come, Lord Jesus.

P Draw near to us, O God, and receive our prayers for the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

C Amen.

Arise in body or spirit.

Offertory Song

He Came Down

ELW 253



1 He came down that we may have love; he came down that we may have love;
2 He came down that we may have light; he came down that we may have light;
3 He came down that we may have peace; he came down that we may have peace;
4 He came down that we may have joy; he came down that we may have joy;



he came down that we may have love;
he came down that we may have light; hal - le - lu - jah for - ev - er - more.
he came down that we may have peace;
he came down that we may have joy;

Offering Prayer

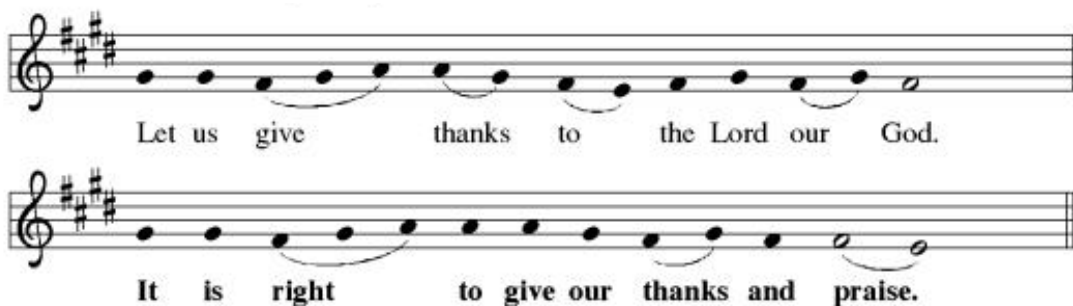
- A** Let us pray . . . Generous God, you have created all that is, and you provide for us in every season.
- G** Bless all that we offer, that through these gifts the world will receive your blessing. In the name of Jesus, Emmanuel, we pray. Amen.

Sharing the Peace of God

- P** The peace of Christ be with you.
- G** And also with you.
(We share the peace of Christ with one another.)

Great Thanksgiving





☞ It is indeed right, our duty and our joy, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God, through our Savior Jesus Christ; who on this day overcame death and the grave, and by his glorious resurrection opened to us the way of everlasting life. And so, with all the choirs of angels, with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

Holy, Holy, Holy

ELW page 153



Table Prayer

- ☞ Holy God, the Beginning and the End, our Salvation and our Hope, we praise you for creating a world of order and beauty.
- ☞ **When we brought on chaos, cruelty and despair, you sent the prophets to proclaim your justice and mercy. At this end of the ages your Son Jesus came to bring us your love and to heal all the suffering world.**
- ☞ 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. Remembering, therefore, his life, death, and resurrection, we await Christ's coming again in righteousness and peace.
- ☞ **Send your Spirit on us and on this bread and wine we share.**
- ☞ Strengthen our faith, increase our hope, and bring to birth the justice and joy of your Son.
- ☞ **Through Christ all glory and honor is yours, Almighty Father, with the Holy Spirit, in your holy Church, both now and forever. Amen.**

Lord's Prayer

- ☞ Gathered by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught:
- ☞ **Our Father in heaven, holy be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.**

Invitation to Communion

- ☞ Come to the table of grace.
- ☞ **Thanks be to God.**

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.

Communion Songs

We Are Waiting for Jesus

ACS 905

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

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.
Lov - ing Shep - herd, walk be - side us; stir our hearts, and gent - ly guide us.



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

Now the Heavens Start to Whisper

ACS 901



1 Now the heav - ens start to whis - per, as the veil is grow - ing thin.
2 Heav - y clouds that block the moon - light now be - gin to drift a - way.
3 Christ, e - ter - nal Sun of jus - tice, Christ, the rose of wis - dom's seed,



Earth from slum - ber wakes to lis - ten to the stir - ring, faint with - in:
Dia - mond bril - liance through the dark - ness shines the hope of com - ing day.
come to bless with fire and fra - grance hours of yearn - ing, hurt, and need.



seed of prom - ise, deep - ly plant - ed, child to spring from Jes - se's stem!
Christ, the morn - ing star of splen - dor, gleams with - in a world grown dim.
In the lone - ly, in the strang - er, in the out - cast, hid from view;



Like the soil be - neath the frost - line, hearts grow soft to wel - come him.
Heav - en's em - ber fans to full - ness; hearts grow warm to wel - come him.
Child who comes to grace the man - ger, teach our hearts to wel - come you.

Prayer after Communion

- Ⓐ God of promise, you give food to those who hunger and justice to those who are oppressed.
Ⓑ As you have nourished us in this meal, send us to proclaim the coming of your righteous reign; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Mission Minutes

Arise in body or spirit

Blessing

- ☞ The Creator of the stars bless your Advent waiting, the long-expected Savior fill you with love, the unexpected Spirit guide your journey, ✚ now and forever.

☞ Amen.

Sending Song

Drawn to the Light

ELW 593

Sending

☞ Go in peace. Prepare the way of the Lord.

☞ Thanks be to God.

Postlude

8:00 am

Assisting Minister – Randy Teegardin

Lector – Dave Neeb

Cantor – Cindy Olson

Musician – Cindy Olson

Pastor – Ken Scheck II

10:45 am

Assisting Minister – Mark Anton

Lector – Vickey Argo

Cantor – Ken Scheck II

Musician – Cindy Olson

Pastor – Ken Scheck II

Fellowship – Bill and Lorraine Freedlund

Patterns of Grace

People who sew often use patterns to guide their creations. To make a skirt, suit, or quilt of a certain size, one cuts out the pattern, pins it to fabric, and then cuts along the pattern to get pieces of cloth that are the right sizes and shapes to be sewn together.

In today's gospel reading we find a pattern that is repeated throughout the biblical narrative: a person of faith does something that draws the attention of others, which gives them an opportunity to share the story of their faith. The prophets often performed public actions that led to them speaking the word of the Lord. It is not surprising that the conspicuous work of John the Baptist at the Jordan River caused the priests and Levites to wonder if he was "the prophet."

Early in the Gospel of John we are told that John the Baptist was a witness who would testify to the light that is Jesus. John's answer to the religious leaders' queries continues with the language of testimony, as he confesses that he is not the Messiah. We see the pattern at work here: John's actions are a proclamation all their own, but those actions draw others' attention, and that gives him an opportunity to testify, to share his story of God's way.

This pattern keeps going with us today as God continues to stitch grace into the world. Whose actions of faith have drawn your attention? How have their stories of faith been a comfort or challenge to you? Our actions need not be as ambitious as baptizing a whole community in the river for people to take notice. Our following the way of Jesus will draw people's attention, and their curiosity then gives us an opportunity to testify, to share our stories of transformation, faith, hope, and love.

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Christmas Eve Service 7:00 p.m.

On the Fourth Sunday of Advent will have a combined morning service at 10 am on December 24th.

On New Year's Eve will have a combined morning service at 10 am on December 31st.

Please Note the LACS concert today will begin at 3:30 instead of 3:00 for those attending.

The Advent devotional THE LIGHT OF GRACE is available on the table in the Gathering Area. Compliments of the Outreach Committee.

Advent Worship. Join us for our last Advent Worship this Wednesday night at 7:15 pm in the sanctuary for **Holden Evening Prayer**. This Wednesday we continue to share in scripture and sing the message of salvation. There is a short time of reflection. If you are able to come earlier for a meal, please join us at 6:15. Proceeds go to Family Promise.

Christmas Family Adoptions. We are adopting 5 families again this year. Watch for the donation board to be posted in the Gathering Area. Take a reminder tag for one of the gifts you would like to donate for one of the children in a family. Instruction sheets will be available on the board for wrapping, identifying, and returning your gift. Plan to return your donation by **TODAY Sunday, Dec. 17th**. **THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTNERSHIP IN MINISTRY.**

Giving Tree. The Giving Tree in the Gathering Area is up. This year we will be gathering items of donation to the **Alpha Women's Center** and **Family Promise of Barry County**. Tags with suggested donations will be hanging on the tree for you take with you as a reminder. Please do not wrap these donations so the organizations can easily identify each donation. **Donations can be received through January 7th.**

Adult Forum Join us this week, as we continue our study of Galatians. We meet in the Gathering Area Sundays at 9:30 am. This will be our last study of Galatians in 2023.

Giving Envelopes and Numbers Giving envelopes are available on the table in the Gathering Area. If you requested "no envelopes" over the summer and now need them, please let Brenda know and she will give you some. Some people will be keeping their current numbers, but many will get new numbers for 2024. We will be sure to keep you updated as we get closer to the new year. It will be helpful to write your name on the outside of your envelope during the month of February in case there are changes we need to make. Thank you.

Stewardship Information

Welcome to worship today! We hope you find what we have found - a loving Jesus who welcomes all. No matter your background or faith tradition, you will find that Grace Lutheran Church is a place that is full of love, care, and support. We are pleased that you are here among us to worship the ONE who saves us from the darkness in our lives. As we see John pointing to Jesus as God's redeemer that makes our paths straight, let us celebrate God's awesome grace.

Stewardship Information

Please use this QR
Code to access
online giving.



Attendance: 78
Weekly Giving: \$2,093.90
Noisy Offering: \$34.31
Outreach Brat Sale: \$398.25

Views: 306
Budget Amount: \$4,366.17
Christmas Families: \$50.00
Outreach Calendars: \$235.00

Grace Projects As you know, we have fully funded a new HVAC system for the Fellowship Hall. The Congregation Council has voted to have a fundraiser to replenish the funds we raised. Much like the roof deductible, we are seeking to make sure we have funds for any future property needs. The cost of the HVAC was \$25,252. We appreciate any contributions toward this future need of caring for our building.

Book Study entitled Jesus and the Jewish Roots of the Eucharist. The next study session is **TODAY**.

The nursery is available weekly during the 10:45 worship service. Aurora Collins is the Nursery Attendant. She would love to have some little ones visit her. Please spread the word that Grace provides childcare during this worship service.

Hand2Hand Program provides food over the weekend to students at Hastings schools. We are collecting donations of Yoo-Hoo Chocolate Milk, pudding cups, Slim Jims, granola bars, individual size instant oatmeal, ramen noodles, and ready-to-eat mac and cheese. In addition, December items are chicken noodle soup, saltine crackers, individual apple sauce cups, and individual snacks. **The deadline for this month is December 31st.**

Women of Faith meet Tuesdays at 11:00 a.m. All ladies are welcome.

There is no Adult Forum NEXT SUNDAY, Christmas Eve and no study on New Year's Eve with our combined services happening those days. See you in the New Year! January 7, 2024 at 9:30 a.m., when we continue our study of Galatians.