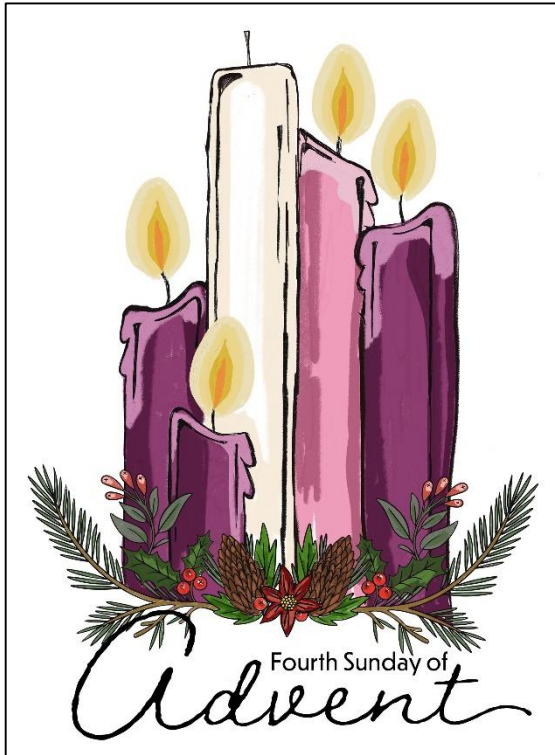


# Messiah Lutheran Church

GATHER, EMPOWER, SERVE



✠ Holy Communion ✠

Fourth Sunday of Advent

December 22, 2024

**FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT**



*Cradle and cross are inextricably connected on the fourth Sunday of Advent. Between a lovely tribute to the little town of Bethlehem and Mary's magnificent song of praise, the letter to the Hebrews reminds us in no uncertain terms that Christ's advent is for "the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." It is the kind of tension in which the church always lives as when in holy communion—with high delight—"we proclaim the Lord's death."*

**GATHERING**

**PRELUDE**

*Stand*

**CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS**

**P:** Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God,  
 alive in the world,  
 reviving creation,  
 arriving soon.

**C:** Amen.

**P:** Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

*Kneel*

**P:** God of mercy,

**C:** we confess that we have sinned.

**We trust earthly powers and human authority alone.**

**We grow fearful. We cling to false comforts.**

**P:** God of might,

**C:** we confess that we have sinned.

**We have turned away from our neighbors.**

**We have trusted false promises.**

**P:** God in our midst,

**C:** we confess that we have sinned.

**We plead: come to us.**

**Bring your mercy to birth in us.**

**P:** A righteous branch springs forth:  
 it is Christ the Lord, our Savior,  
 in whom we have forgiveness, life, and mercy.  
 By the power of the Holy Spirit,  
 receive the grace and forgiveness of God  
 through † Christ Jesus,  
 whose day draws near.

**C:** Amen.

*Stand*

**GATHERING HYMN**     *Oh, Come, Oh, Come, Emmanuel*

1 Oh, come, oh, come, Em - man - u - el, and ran - som cap - tive  
 2 Oh, come, oh, come, great Lord of might, who to your tribes on  
 3 Oh, come, strong Branch of Jes - se, free your own from Sa - tan's  
 4 Oh, come, blest Day - spring, come and cheer our spir - its by your  
 5 Oh, come, O Key of Da - vid, come, and o - pen wide our



Is - ra - el, that mourns in lone - ly ex - ile here  
 Si - nai's height in an - cient times once gave the law  
 tyr - an - ny; from depths of hell your peo - ple save  
 ad - vent here; dis - perse the gloom - y clouds of night,  
 heav'n - ly home; make safe the way that leads on high,



un - til the Son of God ap - pear.  
 in cloud, and maj - es - ty, and awe.  
 and give them vic - t'ry o'er the grave. Re - joice! Re - joice!  
 and death's dark shad - ows put to flight.  
 and close the path to mis - er - y.



Em - man - u - el shall come to you, O Is - ra - el.

Text: *Psalterium Canticum Catholicarum*, Köln, 1710; tr. John M. Neale, 1818–1866, alt.

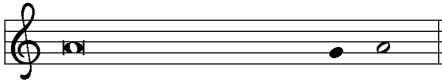
Music: VENI, EMMANUEL, French processional, 15th cent.

**APOSTOLIC GREETING**

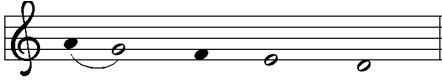
**P:** The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,  
 and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

**C:** **And also with you**

**KYRIE**



In peace, let us pray to the Lord.



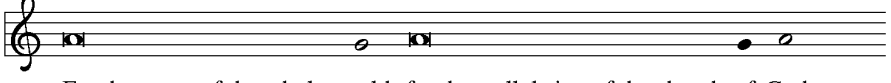
Lord, have mer - cy.



For the peace from a-bove, and for our sal - vation, let us pray to the Lord.



Lord, have mer - cy.



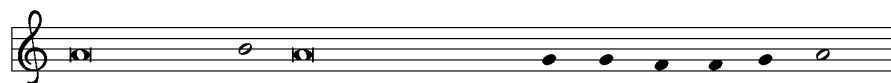
For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the church of God,



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



Lord, have mer - cy.



For this holy house, and for all who offer here their wor-ship and praise,



let us pray to the Lord. Lord have mer - cy.



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

**PRAYER OF THE DAY****P**: Let us pray.

Stir up your power, Lord Christ, and come. With your abundant grace and might, free us from the sin that binds us, that we may receive you in joy and serve you always, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**C**: Amen*Sit***LIGHTING OF THE WREATH**

**A**: We praise you, O God, for this evergreen crown that marks our days of preparation for Christ's advent. As we light the fourth candle on this wreath, rouse us from sleep, that we may be ready to greet our Lord when he comes with all the saints and angels. Enlighten us with your grace, and prepare our hearts to welcome him with joy. Grant this through Christ our Lord, whose coming is certain and whose day draws near.

**C**: Amen**ADVENT CHORAL VERSE***As the fourth candle is lit, the choir sings the advent verse.***WORD****FIRST READING: Micah 5:2-5a**

*The prophet Micah, having pronounced judgment upon Judah, speaks of a future shepherd-king who, like David, will come from the small town of Bethlehem. (Ephrathah refers to the area around Bethlehem.) This king will restore Israel and bring peace. New Testament writers understood this passage to be referring to Jesus.*

**A**: A Reading from Micah:

<sup>2</sup> But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah,  
 who are one of the little clans of Judah,  
 from you shall come forth for me  
 one who is to rule in Israel,  
 whose origin is from of old,  
 from ancient days.

<sup>3</sup> Therefore he shall give them up until the time  
 when she who is in labor has brought forth;  
 then the rest of his kindred shall return

to the people of Israel.

<sup>4</sup> And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the LORD,  
in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God.

And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great  
to the ends of the earth;

<sup>5a</sup> and he shall be the one of peace.

**A**: The word of the Lord.

**C**: **Thanks be to God.**

**ADVENT RESPONSE: Luke 1:46b-55**

*The cantor sings the refrain; the congregation repeats it.*

Musical notation for the refrain: "You, LORD, have lift-ed up the low - ly." The notation is in G major (one flat) and 4/4 time. It consists of a single melodic line on a treble clef staff. The notes are: G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C5 (quarter), B4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), G4 (quarter), F4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), D4 (quarter), C4 (half).

*Sung responsively between the cantor and congregation.*

Musical notation for the responsorial text: "My soul proclaims the greatness | of the Lord, my spirit rejoices in | God my Savior, for you, Lord, have looked with favor on your | lowly servant." The notation is in G major (one flat) and 4/4 time. It consists of a single melodic line on a treble clef staff. The notes are: G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C5 (quarter), B4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), G4 (quarter), F4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), D4 (quarter), C4 (half).

<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. R**

<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 prom- | ise of mercy,**

<sup>55</sup> the promise made | to our forebears,  
to Abraham and his chil- | dren forever. **R**

**SECOND READING: Hebrews 10:5-10**

*The author of Hebrews uses the image of religious sacrifice to convey the significance of Christ's coming. Through obedient acceptance of God's will, Christ allows his own body to become the greatest sacrifice of all, one through which we are made a holy people.*

**A:** A Reading from Hebrews:

<sup>5</sup> Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said,

“Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired,  
but a body you have prepared for me;

<sup>6</sup> in burnt offerings and sin offerings  
you have taken no pleasure.

<sup>7</sup> Then I said, ‘See, God, I have come to do your will, O God’  
(in the scroll of the book it is written of me).”

<sup>8</sup> When he said above, “You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings” (these are offered according to the law), <sup>9</sup> then he added, “See, I have come to do your will.” He abolishes the first in order to establish the second. <sup>10</sup> And it is by God’s will that we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

**A:** The word of the Lord.

**C:** Thanks be to God.

*Stand*

**GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

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

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

**CANTOR:** Here I am, the servant | of the Lord; let it be with me  
according | to your word.

**C:** Repeat the Alleluias

**GOSPEL: Luke 1:39-55**

*Elizabeth, John's mother, and Mary, the mother of Jesus, are two women filled with the Holy Spirit and with faith. In Elizabeth's inspired greeting and Mary's song of praise we hear of a saving God who remembers, scatters, lifts up, and fulfills all things.*

**P:** The Holy Gospel according to St. Luke, the first chapter.

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

<sup>39</sup> In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, <sup>40</sup> where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. <sup>41</sup> When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit <sup>42</sup> and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. <sup>43</sup> And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? <sup>44</sup> For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. <sup>45</sup> And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord."

<sup>46</sup> And Mary said,

"My soul magnifies the Lord,

<sup>47</sup> and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

<sup>48</sup> for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant.

Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;

<sup>49</sup> for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name.

<sup>50</sup> His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation.

<sup>51</sup> He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.

<sup>52</sup> He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly;

<sup>53</sup> he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty.

<sup>54</sup> He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy,

<sup>55</sup> according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever."

**P:** The Gospel of the Lord

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

*Sit*

**SERMON**..... **Pastor Amme**



Stand

**HYMN OF THE DAY**     *Savior of the Nations, Come*

- 1 Sav - ior of the na - tions, come; show the glo - ry of the Son!  
 2 Not of hu - man seed or worth, but from God's own mys - tic breath,  
 3 Won - drous birth! Oh, won - drous child of the vir - gin un - de - filed!  
 4 God the Fa - ther is his source, back to God he runs his course;



Ev - 'ry peo - ple, stand in awe; praise the per - fect Son of God.  
 fruit in Mar - y's womb be - gun when God breathed the Word, his Son.  
 Might - y God and man in one, ca - ger now his race to run!  
 down to death and hell de - scends, God's high throne he re - as - cends.

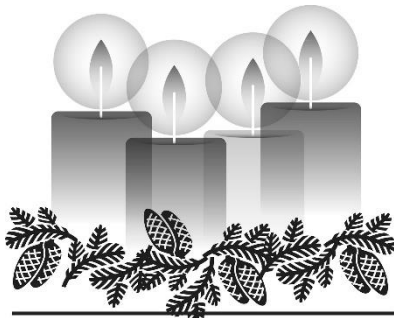
- 5 He leaves heaven to return;  
 trav'ling where dull hellfires burn;  
 riding out, returning home  
 as the Savior who has come.
- 6 God the Father's precious Son  
 girds himself in flesh to run  
 for the trophies of our souls,  
 longer than this round earth rolls.
- 7 Shining stable in the night,  
 breathing vict'ry with your light;  
 darkness cannot hide your flame,  
 shining bright as Jesus' name.

Text: attr. St. Ambrose, 340–397; tr. composite

Music: NUN KOMM, DER HEIDEN HEILAND, J. Walter, *Geistliche Gesangbüchlein*, 1524

Text sts. 3–4 © 1969 Concordia Publishing House

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**NICENE CREED**

**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**

*A brief silence is held after the introduction.*

**P:** As we prepare for Emmanuel, God-with-us, let us pray for all people and places that long for God’s presence.

*After each petition:*

**P:** Lord, in your mercy,

**C:** **receive our prayer.**

*The prayers conclude:*

**P:** Savior of the nations, come, and receive these prayers and the pleas of our hearts, in the name of Jesus Christ.

**C:** **Amen**

**PEACE**

**P:** The peace of Christ be with you always.

**C:** **And also with you.**

*The pastor and congregation greet one another in the name of the Lord.*

Peace be with you. **R:** Peace be with you.

*Sit*

***MEAL***

**OFFERING**

*The Offering is received as the Lord's table is prepared.*

**ANTHEM**

***He Will Come*..... Patrick Liebergen**

*Stand*

**OFFERTORY**

*As the gifts are presented, the Offertory is sung*

**C** Let the vine- yards be fruit-ful, Lord, and fill to the brim our cup of  
 bless- ing. Gath- er a har-vest from the seeds that were sown, that we may be  
 fed with the bread of life. Gath- er the hopes and dreams of all; u -



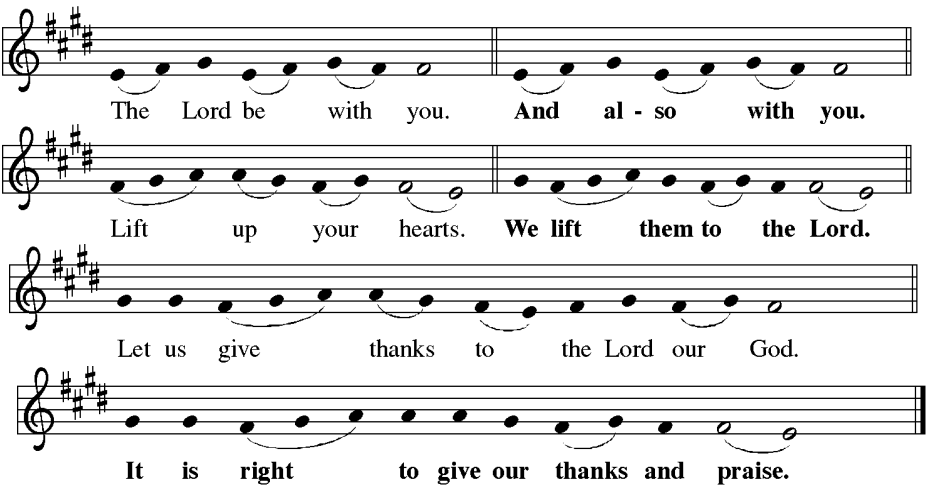
nite them with the prayers we of - fer. Grace our ta - ble with your  
 pres - ence, and give us a fore - taste of the feast to come.

### OFFERING PRAYER

**A:** Let us pray:

**C:** Creator God,  
 you made the whole world,  
 even the farthest stars,  
 and you draw near to feed us.  
 We praise you for these gifts of bread and wine.  
 Strengthen us with this food  
 that we may live in expectation  
 for the advent of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.  
 Amen.

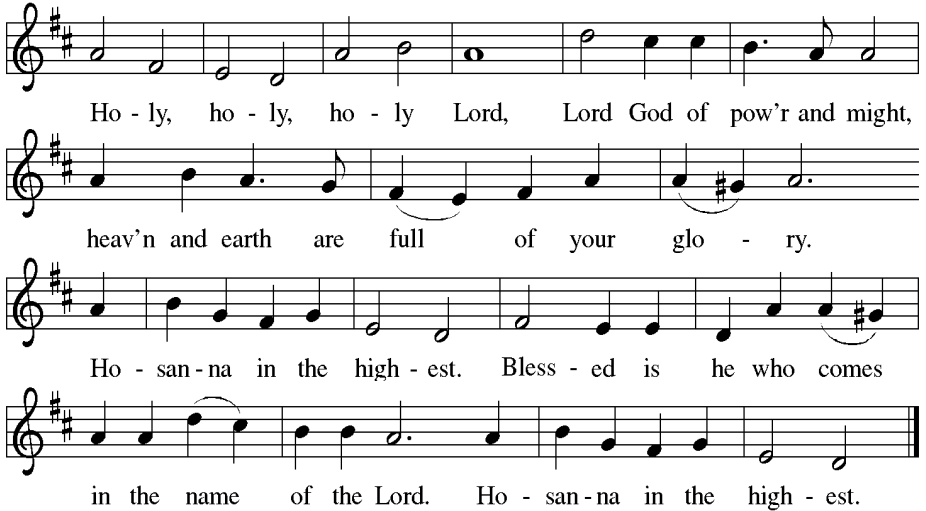
### GREAT THANKSGIVING



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 our thanks and praise.

**PREFACE**

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. 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 to judge the world in righteousness. 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:



Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, Lord God of pow'r and might,  
 heav'n and earth are full of your glo - ry.  
 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.

**EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER**

**P:** Holy One, the beginning and the end,  
 the giver of life:

Blessed are you for the birth of creation.

Blessed are you in the darkness and in the light.

Blessed are you for your promise to your people.

Blessed are you in the prophets' hopes and dreams.

Blessed are you for Mary's openness to your will.

Blessed are you for your Son Jesus, the Word made flesh.

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.

**P**: Let us proclaim the mystery of faith:

**C**: **Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.**

**P**: With this bread and cup we remember your Word  
dwelling among us, full of grace and truth.  
We remember our new birth in his death and resurrection.  
We look with hope for his coming.

**C**: **Come, Lord Jesus.**

**P**: Holy God, we long for your Spirit.  
Come among us. Bless this meal.  
May your Word take flesh in us.  
Awaken your people. Fill us with your light.  
Bring the gift of peace on earth.

**C**: **Come, Holy Spirit.**

**P**: All praise and glory are yours,  
Holy One of Israel,  
Word of God incarnate,  
Power of the Most High,  
One God, now and forever.

**C**: **Amen**

### **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:** God feeds us with tender mercy.  
Come to the table.

**C:** 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.

*Sit*

**COMMUNION**

*All baptized believers are invited to this holy meal. Those not communing are invited for a blessing. Please follow the instructions of the ushers to gather at the altar table.*

*As the ministers give the bread and wine, they say these words to each communicant:*

**The body of Christ, given for you. The blood of Christ, shed for you.**

***The communicant may say: Amen***



**COMMUNION HYMN**     *The Advent of Our God*

1 The ad - vent of our God shall be our theme for prayer;  
 2 The ev - er - last - ing Son in - car - nate stoops to be,  
 3 Come, Zi - on's daugh - ter, rise to meet your low - ly king,  
 4 As judge, on clouds of light, he soon will come a - gain,

come, let us meet him on the road and place for him pre - pare.  
 him - self the ser - vant's form puts on to set his peo - ple free.  
 nor let your faith - less heart de - spise the peace he comes to bring.  
 and all his scat - tered saints u - nite with him on high to reign.

5 Before the dawning day  
 let sin be put to flight;  
 no longer let the law hold sway,  
 but walk in freedom's light.

6 All glory to the Son,  
 who comes to set us free,  
 with Father, Spirit, ever one  
 through all eternity.

Text: Charles Coffin, 1676–1749; tr. John Chandler, 1806–1876, alt.  
 Music: FRANCONIA, Johann B. König, 1691–1758, adapt.

*Stand*

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

**C:** Amen

**POST-COMMUNION PRAYER**

**A:** Let us pray.

Generous God,  
 we thank you for the gift of life, for the bread of salvation.  
 We thank you for coming among us, for leading us into peace.  
 We thank you for showering us with mercy, for sending us into the world.  
 Come, Lord Jesus, and go with us as we feed the hungry in your name.

**C:** Amen



**SENDING****BLESSING**

**P:** God of endings and beginnings,  
 God in the darkness and the light,  
 God, our hope for the journey,  
 † bless and keep you now and forever.

**C:** Amen

**SENDING HYMN**    *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-'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.

Text: Charles Wesley, 1707-1788  
 Music: JEFFERSON, W. Walker, *Southern Harmony*, 1835

**POSTLUDE**

### SERVICE ASSISTANTS

**Ushers:** Charles Luppert, Larry & Donna Britton, Gail O'Brien, Sylvia McCarty, Larry Solomon; **Lay Assistant:** Anita Bair; **Comm. Asst.:** Candy Watkins;  
**Acolyte:** Brennen Hess; **Altar Guild:** Sue Shoemaker, Yvonne Kaiser  
**Greeters/Communion Presenters:** Howard and Jean Wilt  
**Cantor:** Dave Bausinger; **Flower Delivery:** Arch Watkins

### IN BLESSED MEMORY

**The Altar Flowers** are given to the Glory of God and in honor of Michelle Boyles birthday by her daughters Madilyn, Maisy and her family.

**The Basket of Flowers** is given to the Glory of God and in loving and living memory of Susie, David, Annamary and George Hutchinson by the Hutchinson and Nancarrow families.

### ANNOUNCEMENTS

**Welcome to Messiah Church!** It is our joy to have you worship with us. If you are visiting, please make yourself known and leave your name & information to a congregation member. *We hope to see you again.*

**We will decorate the church** immediately following worship today.

**Thank you to all who contributed**, donated and helped with the white gifts and Christmas baskets. We were able to provide 40 children out of 14 families with white gifts and 16 families with Christmas baskets.

**Pledge cards and Time & Talent forms will be accepted through December 29.**

**Poinsettias are to be picked up** after the 11:00 pm worship service on Christmas Eve or on Sunday, December 29th after worship.

**Please Note:** No Messenger will be printed/sent on Wednesday, January 1  
*Please have any announcements for December 25 through January 5 to the office by Monday December 23. Thank you.*

### OFFICE HOLIDAY HOURS

**CLOSED** – Christmas Day – **thru** - New Year's Day, January 1, 2025

**Normal office hours** will resume – Thursday, January 2

9:00 am-3:00 pm

**\*PLEASE NOTE\*** There will **NOT** be a service Christmas Eve at 9:30.  
There was a misprint on the cover of the Messenger.

**MESSIAH LUTHERAN CHURCH**  
**REV. A. BRUCE AMME, PRESIDING AND PREACHING**  
**JARED GIST, ORGANIST**

324 South Howard Street | South Williamsport, PA 17702  
(570) 326-9171 | [www.messiahsouth.org](http://www.messiahsouth.org)

### **Not Fate but Faith**

It's easy to take for granted that everything came together just so. With Christmas only days away, the expectant mood of the Advent season turns swiftly to joy. We might as well already be pacing outside the stable as we eagerly anticipate the baby soon to be born. Because we know what happens next, we might even assume that events *had* to unfold exactly the way they did: The angel Gabriel came to Mary, her pregnancy seemed inevitable, and the promises God had made to Israel would be proven complete. We are not likely to give Mary's role in the story a second thought. We assume she had little choice. At least that's the way we often think about her response.

But that's not entirely the way the story goes. The gospel itself doesn't assume as much. Elizabeth certainly doesn't. She acknowledges Mary's willingness to honor the angel's announcement: "Blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord" (Luke 1:45). For indeed, the angel's words initially confused Mary: none of it seemed to make sense. Her part in the story could have ended there. And yet she is moved by what she hears. Her trust in God's word is neither coerced compliance nor certain knowledge, but a response rooted in trust—not a foregone conclusion but a faithful leaning into the promises presented to her. The story did not have to go the way it did, but Mary trusted that it would.

Often only when we reflect on the journey we've already made, do we fully appreciate the ways God has repeatedly shown up. There's a gift in such moments of clarity. There's also a gift in the realization that even in seemingly impossible circumstances, choices must often be made. This was true for Mary, and also for Jesus. His journey from the cradle to the cross was not fate: it was a series of faithful choices, like Mary's, to trust in God's promises of new life.

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