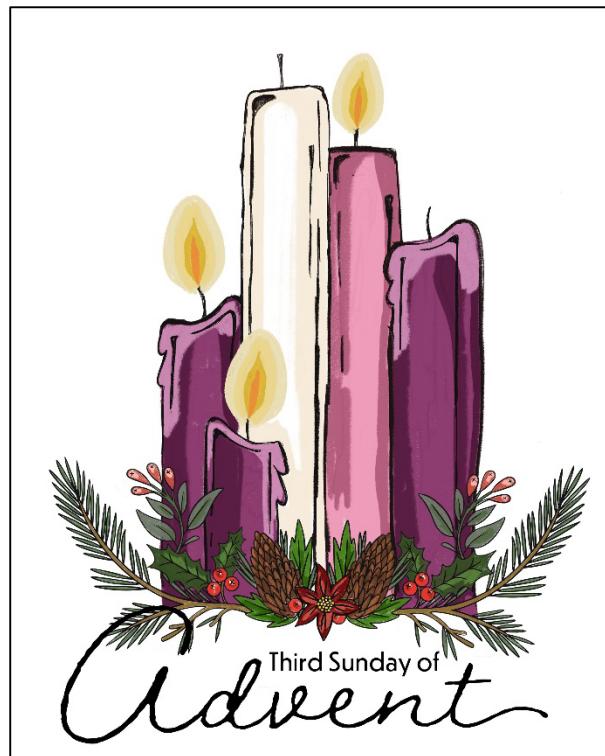


Messiah Lutheran Church

GATHER, EMPOWER, SERVE



† Holy Communion †

Third Sunday of Advent

December 14, 2025

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

A note of joyful expectation marks today's worship. Isaiah announces that the desert shall rejoice and blossom, and Jesus points to the unexpected and transforming signs of God's reign. We wait with patience for the coming of the Lord, even as we rejoice at his presence among us this day: in word and holy supper, in church and in our homes, in silent reflection and in works of justice and love. We pray that God would open our eyes and ears to the wonders of Christ's advent among us.

GATHERING**PRELUDE**

Stand

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

P: Blessed be the holy Trinity, **☩** one God,
whose home is heaven and earth,
whose salvation is sure.

C: Amen.

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

Kneel

P: Long-expected God,

C: we confess that we look to ourselves
for the peace and security only you can provide.
We reach for swords and spears,
reluctant to release our grip on the ways of war.
We become impatient while waiting
and weary of keeping awake.

Free us from self-reliance,
and teach us to live in harmony with our neighbors.
Increase our trust in God's timing,
and awaken us to your advent among us,
that we may abound in the hope you have promised.
Amen.

P: God judges us not as we deserve,
but according to God's own righteousness.
☩ You are freed and forgiven,
saved by grace,
and ready to welcome the Savior.

C: Amen.

Stand

GATHERING HYMN *Prepare the Royal Highway*

1 Pre - pare the roy - al high - way; the King of kings is near!
 2 God's peo - ple, see him com - ing: your own e - ter - nal king!
 3 Then fling the gates wide o - pen to greet your prom-ised king!
 4 His is no earth - ly king - dom; it comes from heav'n a - bove.

Let ev - 'ry hill and val - ley a lev - el road ap - pear!
 Palm branch-es strew be - fore him! Spread gar - ments! Shout and sing!
 Your king, yet ev - 'ry na - tion its trib - ute too may bring.
 His rule is peace and free - dom and jus - tice, truth, and love.

Then greet the King of glo - ry, fore - told in sa - cred sto - ry:
 God's prom-ise will not fail you! No more shall doubt as - sail you!
 All lands will bow be - fore him; their voic - es join your sing - ing:
 So let your praise be sound-ing for kind-ness so a - bound - ing:

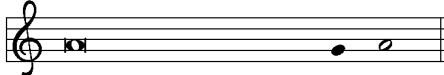
Refrain

Ho - san - na to the Lord, for he ful - fills God's word!

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 - va-tion, let us pray to the Lord.



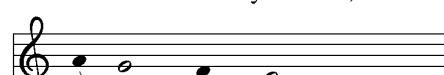
Lord, have mer - cy.



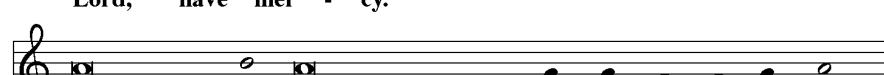
For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the church of God,



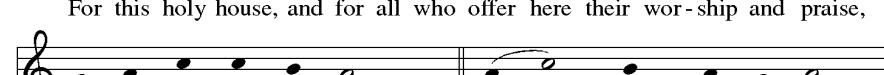
and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord.



Lord, have mer - cy.

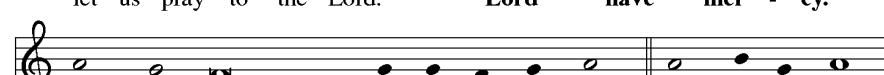


For this holy house, and for all who offer here their wor-ship and praise,



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 the wills of all who look to you, Lord God, and strengthen our faith in your coming, that, transformed by grace, we may walk in your way; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you 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 first 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 third candle is lit, the choir sings the verse.

WORD**FIRST READING: Isaiah 35:1-10**

The prophet describes the return from the Babylonian captivity as a joyous procession to Zion. God's coming reign will bring a renewal of creation in which health and wholeness will be restored. There is no need for fear, for God is coming to save.

A: A Reading from Isaiah:

¹ The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad;
the desert shall rejoice and blossom;
like the crocus ² it shall blossom abundantly
and rejoice with joy and shouting.
The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it,
the majesty of Carmel and Sharon.
They shall see the glory of the LORD,
the majesty of our God.]]

³ Strengthen the weak hands
and make firm the feeble knees.

⁴Say to those who are of a fearful heart,

“Be strong, do not fear!

Here is your God.

He will come with vengeance,

with terrible recompense.

He will come and save you.”

⁵Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,

and the ears of the deaf shall be opened;

⁶then the lame shall leap like a deer,

and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy.

For waters shall break forth in the wilderness

and streams in the desert;

⁷the burning sand shall become a pool

and the thirsty ground springs of water;

the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp;

the grass shall become reeds and rushes.

⁸A highway shall be there,

and it shall be called the Holy Way;

the unclean shall not travel on it,

but it shall be for God’s people;

no traveler, not even fools, shall go astray.

⁹No lion shall be there,

nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it;

they shall not be found there,

but the redeemed shall walk there.

¹⁰And the ransomed of the LORD shall return

and come to Zion with singing;

everlasting joy shall be upon their heads;

they shall obtain joy and gladness,

and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

A: The word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

PSALM: Psalm 146:5-10*The cantor sings the refrain; the congregation repeats it.*

The LORD lifts up those who are bowed down.

Sung responsively between the cantor and congregation.

⁵ Happy are they who have the God of Jacob | for their help,
whose hope is in the | LORD their God;

⁶ **who made heaven and earth, the seas, and all that | is in them;**
who keeps promises | es forever;

⁷ who gives justice to those who are oppressed, and food to | those who hunger.

The LORD sets the | captive free.

⁸ **The LORD opens the eyes of the blind; the LORD lifts up those**
who | are bowed down;
the LORD | loves the righteous. R

⁹ The LORD cares | for the stranger;
the LORD sustains the orphan and widow, but frustrates the way | of the wicked.

¹⁰ **The LORD shall | reign forever,**
your God, O Zion, throughout all generations. | Hallelujah! R

SECOND READING: James 5:7-10*In anticipation of the Lord's coming, Christians are called upon to cultivate patience rather than discontent.***A:** A Reading from James:

⁷ Be patient, therefore, brothers and sisters, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious crop from the earth, being patient with it until it receives the early and the late rains. ⁸ You also must be patient. Strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near. ⁹ Brothers and sisters, do not grumble against one another, so that you may not be judged. See, the Judge is standing at the doors! ¹⁰ As an example of suffering and patience, brothers and sisters, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.

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: I am sending my messenger before you,* who will prepare your way before you.

C: Repeat the Alleluias

GOSPEL: Matthew 11:2-11

John the Baptist expects the Messiah to bring God's judgment upon the earth (Matt. 3:11-12). From a prison cell, he wonders whether Jesus is the one who will do this. Jesus' response indicates that God's reign is indeed being fulfilled already through healing and restoration.

P: The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the eleventh chapter.

C: Glory to you, O Lord.

² When John heard in prison what the Messiah was doing, he sent word by his disciples ³ and said to him, "Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?" ⁴ Jesus answered them, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: ⁵ the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, those with a skin disease are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them. ⁶ And blessed is anyone who takes no offense at me."

⁷ As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to look at? A reed shaken by the wind? ⁸ What, then, did you go out to see? Someone dressed in soft robes? Look, those who wear soft robes are in royal palaces. ⁹ What, then, did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. ¹⁰ This is the one about whom it is written, 'See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.'

¹¹ "Truly I tell you, among those born of women no one has arisen greater than John the Baptist, yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

P: The Gospel of the Lord

C: Praise to you, O Christ.

Sit

SERMON Pastor Ronald Montgomery

Stand

HYMN OF THE DAY *Hark, the Glad Sound!*

1 Hark, the glad sound! The Sav - ior comes, the Sav - ior
 2 He comes the pris - 'ners to re - lease, in Sa - tan's
 3 He comes the bro - ken heart to bind, the bleed - ing
 4 Our glad ho - san - nas, Prince of peace, your wel - come

prom - ised long; let ev - 'ry heart pre -
 bond - age held. The gates of brass be -
 soul to cure, and with the trea - sures
 shall pro - claim, and heav'n's e - ter - nal

pare a throne and ev - 'ry voice a song.
 fore him burst, the i - ron fet - ters yield.
 of his grace to en - rich the hum - ble poor.
 arch - es ring with your be - lov - ed name.

Text: Philip Doddridge, 1702-1751
 Music: CHESTERFIELD, Thomas Haweis, 1734-1820

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: In our waiting and watching, we come to you in prayer, O God, trusting
 your promise to renew the church, the nations, and the whole creation.

After each petition:

P: God of grace,

C: **hear our prayer.**

The prayers conclude:

P: Draw near to us, O God, as we commend all for whom we pray, trusting
 in your mercy through Jesus Christ, Emmanuel.

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. **P:** Peace be with you.

Sit

MEAL**OFFERING**

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

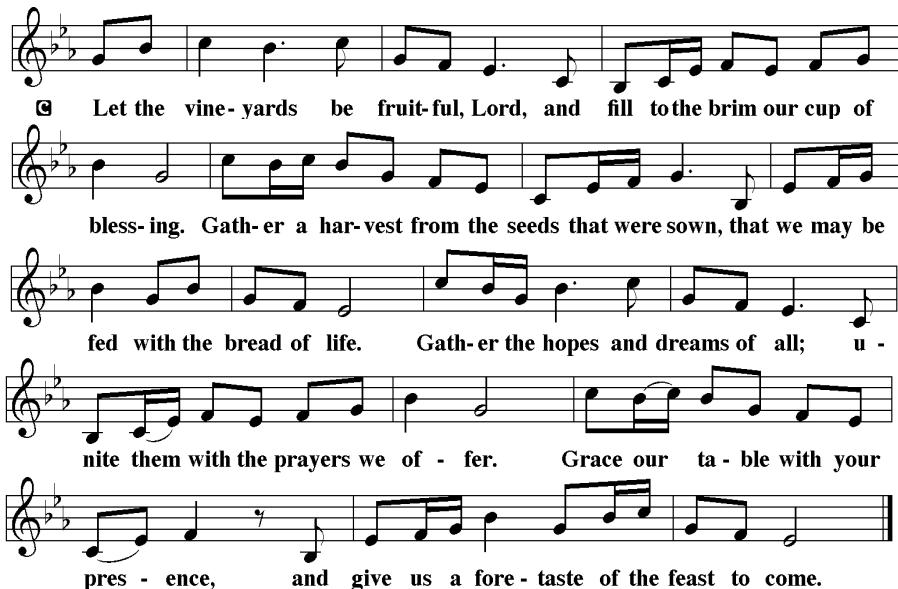
ANTHEM

*Come Down, O Lord of Light.....*Patrick M. Liebergen

Stand

OFFERTORY

As the gifts are presented, the Offertory is sung



The musical notation consists of six staves of music in common time, treble clef, and a key signature of one flat. The lyrics are integrated into the music, with the first line starting with a 'C' and the subsequent lines starting with a 'G'. The lyrics are as follows:

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: Nourishing God,

you are water in the wilderness and streams in the desert.

Through this meal, satisfy our parched places,

that we may rejoice and be for the world

signs of your kingdom come.

C: Amen.

GREAT THANKSGIVING

The Lord be with you. And also 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.

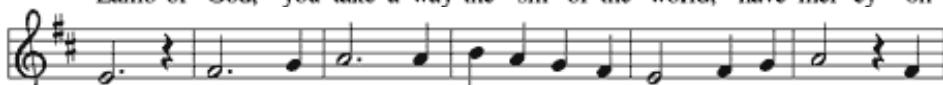
INVITATION TO COMMUNION

P: Here is life. God is with us.
Come, receive what God has promised.

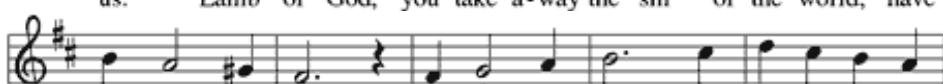
C: Thanks be to God.



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



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 Hail to the Lord's Anointed

1 Hail to the Lord's anoint - ed, great Da - vid's greater Son!
 2 You come with res - cue speed - y to those who suf - fer wrong,
 3 You shall come down like show - ers up - on the fruit - ful earth;
 4 Kings shall fall down be - fore you, and gold and in - cense bring;



Hail, in the time ap - point - ed, your reign on earth be - gun!
 to help the poor and need - y, and bid the weak be strong;
 love, joy, and hope, like flow - ers, spring in your path to birth.
 all na - tions shall a - dore you, your praise all peo - ple sing.



You come to break op - pres - sion, to set the cap - tive
 to give them songs for sigh - ing, their dark - ness turn to
 Be - fore you on the moun - tains shall peace, the her - ald,
 To you shall prayer un - ceas - ing and dai - ly vows as -



free, to take a - way trans - gres - sion and
 light, whose souls, con - demned and dy - ing, are
 go; and righ - teous - ness in foun - tains from
 cend; your king - dom still in - crea - ing, a



rule in eq - - ui - ty.
 pre - cious in - - your - sight.
 hill to val - - ley - flow.
 king - dom with - - out - end.

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.

God our host,
at this table you have fed us with joy and gladness.
Send us forth, eager to share the feast,
welcome the stranger,
and bear good fruit in the name of Jesus.

C Amen

SENDING

BLESSING

P: May God who comes among us,
Father, \texttildetilde Son, and Holy Spirit,
grant you patience in waiting, peace in the darkness,
and good news to share today and always.

C Amen

SENDING HYMN *People, Look East*

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 the 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: Eleanor Farjeon, 1881–1965

Music: BESANCON, French carol; arr. Barry Rose, b. 1934

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DISMISSAL

A: Go in peace. Keep awake.

C: Thanks be to God.

POSTLUDE

SERVICE ASSISTANTS

Ushers: Charles Luppert, Larry and Donna Britton, Rhonda Koch, Sylvia McCarty, Larry Solomon; **Lay Assistant:** Kim Brofee; **Comm. Assist.:** Mandy Feinberg; **Acolyte:** Dylan Sherman; **Altar Guild:** Alice Morrison, April Gardner; **Greeters/Presenters:** April and Mike Gardner
Cantor: Dave Bausinger; **Flower Delivery:** Charles Luppert

IN BLESSED MEMORY

The Altar Flowers are given to the Glory of God and in loving memory of Dennis Ream by his wife Sandy, Dennis Jr., Kelley and 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 with a congregational member. *We hope to see you again.*

This morning we welcome Pastor Ron Montgomery a retired Minister of the ELCA.

Sunday, December 21 immediately following worship we will be decorating the church. VOLUNTEERS ARE NEEDED! Please sign-up on the sheet in the Narthex. **Many hands make quick work. Please share your time and talent.**

The congregation council members will be installed Sunday, December 28, during worship. The members of council for 2026 are newly elected Lauren Russell and re-elected Jimmy Gardner and Rhonda Koch. Current members are Anita Bair, Alfred "Al" Cole, Jody Fullmer, Craig Kropp, Joanie Jackson, Sylvia McCarty, Mary Schultz and Ronald "Ron" Yeagle.

Rehearsal for Saints in Song will be in the choir loft following worship this morning. We hope you will join us. We will sing next Sunday during worship.

Volunteers needed. We need 6 readers for the Lessons and Carols Service on Sunday, December 28. If you would be interested in reading one of the lessons, please sign up on the sheet in the Narthex. *Thank you.*

Please remember to turn in your Estimate of Giving Pledge Cards and Time and Talent forms. You may place them in the offering plate this morning or at the church office. There are still envelopes in the back of the Sanctuary to be picked up.

Poinsettias are to be picked up after the 11:00 pm worship service on Christmas Eve or on Sunday, December 28th after worship.

White Gifts Wrapping - Help Needed! After we do the shopping for the wish items on the tags that were left on the tree, those gifts will need to be wrapped. *Anyone who is able to help with the wrapping is invited to join us on Wednesday, December 17, at 9:30 a.m. in Shaheen Hall.* There will be about 65-70 gifts needing wrapping. It's a joy to join together in mission, and we always have a good time chatting, too ... hope to see you there!

Reminder: All gifts for which tags were taken are due in the Chapel by December 14.

MESSIAH LUTHERAN CHURCH

JARED GIST, ORGANIST

324 South Howard Street | South Williamsport, PA 17702

(570) 326-9171 | www.messiahsouth.org

Keeping Watch

There's nothing quite like the first smell of springtime flowers emerging from the earth. The sensory explosion often catches us by surprise, reminding us that new life is surely coming soon, even though the world still seems to be slumbering and the buds we watch impatiently refuse to open. This third Sunday of Advent lifts the church and stirs our senses as we receive word, along with John the Baptizer, that Jesus is indeed the one we've been waiting for, the one who will turn buds into blooms. This is good news!

We might wonder, however, why we are hearing this news from John's perspective, out of all the voices in the growing community of Jesus-followers. Can we trust his word? After all, John is sitting behind bars at this time, caught in the gears of the world's injustice. John's unjust imprisonment reminds us that working for justice in the world can cause conflict with those in power. But while the world imprisons the innocent and strains to protect the corrupt and cruel, God sees such injustices and works to undo their power. This, too, is good news!

This third Sunday of Advent is sometimes called *Gaudete*, meaning "Rejoice." Cultivating joy amid the brokenness seen in the world is difficult, but God brings new beginnings where we have known only endings. New tendrils of life are emerging! Something new is coming! Let's share the good news as we wait and keep watch together.

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