

Messiah Lutheran Church

GATHER, EMPOWER, SERVE



✝ Holy Communion ✝

Fourth Sunday of Advent

December 21, 2025

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT



Today Isaiah prophesies that a young woman will bear a son and name him Emmanuel. The gospel is Matthew's account of the annunciation and birth of the one named Emmanuel, God-with-us. During these final days of Advent we pray, "O come, O come, Emmanuel," a beloved hymn based on the O Antiphons, ancient prayers appointed for the seven days preceding Christmas. On this final Sunday of Advent we prepare to celebrate the birth of the one born to save us from the power of sin and death.

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**Oh, Come, Oh, Come, Emmanuel.....LBW 34**

- 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.



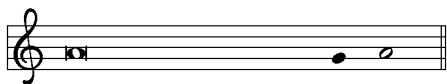
Em - man - u - el shall come to you, O Is - ra - el.

Text: *Psalterium Cantionum 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

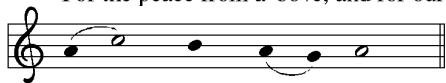
In peace, let us pray to the Lord.



Lord, have mer - cy.



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



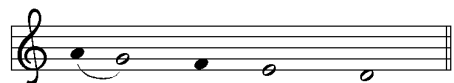
Lord, have mer - cy.



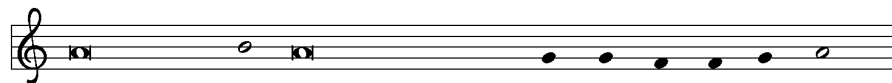
For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the church of God,



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 hinders our faith, that eagerly we may receive your promises, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

G: Amen

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 fourth candle is lit, the choir sings the verse.

WORD**FIRST READING: Isaiah 7:10-16**

An Israelite and Aramean military coalition presented a serious threat to King Ahaz of Judah. In response, Ahaz decided to secure his throne and kingdom by seeking Assyrian help. Isaiah reminds Ahaz that human attempts to establish security will fail. The prophet gives the sign that is the only source of true safety: Immanuel, God is with us!

A: A Reading from Isaiah:

¹⁰ The LORD spoke to Ahaz, saying, ¹¹ "Ask a sign of the LORD your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven." ¹² But Ahaz said, "I will not ask, and I will not put the LORD to the test." ¹³ Then Isaiah said, "Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary mortals that you weary my God also? ¹⁴ Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son and shall name him Immanuel. ¹⁵ He shall eat curds and honey by the time he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good. ¹⁶ For before the child knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land before whose two kings you are in dread will be deserted."

A: The word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

PSALM: Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19*The cantor sings the refrain; the congregation repeats it.*

Let your face shine up - on us, and we shall be saved.

Sung responsively between the cantor and congregation.

- ¹ Hear, O Shepherd of Israel, leading Joseph | like a flock;
shine forth, you that are enthroned up- | on the cherubim.
- ² **In the presence of Ephraim, Benjamin, | and Manasseh,
stir up your strength and | come to help us.**
- ³ Restore | us, O God;
let your face shine upon us, and we | shall be saved.
- ⁴ **O LORD | God of hosts,
how long will your anger fume when your | people pray? R**
- ⁵ You have fed them with the | bread of tears;
you have given them bowls of | tears to drink.
- ⁶ **You have made us the derision | of our neighbors,
and our enemies laugh | us to scorn.**
- ⁷ Restore us, O | God of hosts;
let your face shine upon us, and we | shall be saved.
- ¹⁷ **Let your hand be upon the one at | your right hand,
the one you have made so strong | for yourself.**
- ¹⁸ And so will we never turn a- | way from you;
give us life, that we may call up- | on your name.
- ¹⁹ **Restore us, O LORD | God of hosts;
let your face shine upon us, and we | shall be saved. R**

SECOND READING: Romans 1:1-7*Most of the Christians in Rome do not know Paul. In this letter's opening he introduces himself as an apostle divinely appointed to spread God's gospel. The gospel's content is the promised coming of Christ, and Paul's mission is to bring about the obedience of faith among all nations, including his Roman audience.***[A]:** A Reading from Romans:

- ¹ Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, ² which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures, ³ the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh ⁴ and was declared to be Son of God

with power according to the spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, ⁵ through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the gentiles for the sake of his name, ⁶ including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ,

⁷ To all God's beloved in Rome, who are called to be saints:

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

A: The word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

Stand

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION



CANTOR: The virgin shall conceive and I bear a son, * and they shall name I him Emmanuel.

C: Repeat the Alleluias

GOSPEL: Matthew 1:18-25

Matthew's story of Jesus' birth focuses on the role of Joseph, who adopts the divinely-begotten child into the family of David and obediently gives him the name Jesus, which means "God saves."

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

C: Glory to you, O Lord.

¹⁸ Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be pregnant from the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to divorce her quietly. ²⁰ But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." ²² All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

²³ "Look, the virgin shall become pregnant and give birth to a son,

and they shall name him Emmanuel,” which means, “God is with us.” ²⁴ When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife ²⁵ but had no marital relations with her until she had given birth to a son, and he named him Jesus.

P: The Gospel of the Lord

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

Sit

SERMON.....

Pastor John McNassor


Stand

HYMN OF THE DAY

Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus..... **LBW 30**



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

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

Sit

MEAL

OFFERING

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

ANTHEM

Light an Advent CandleBecki Stagle Mayo

Stand

OFFERTORY

As the gifts are presented, the Offertory is sung

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



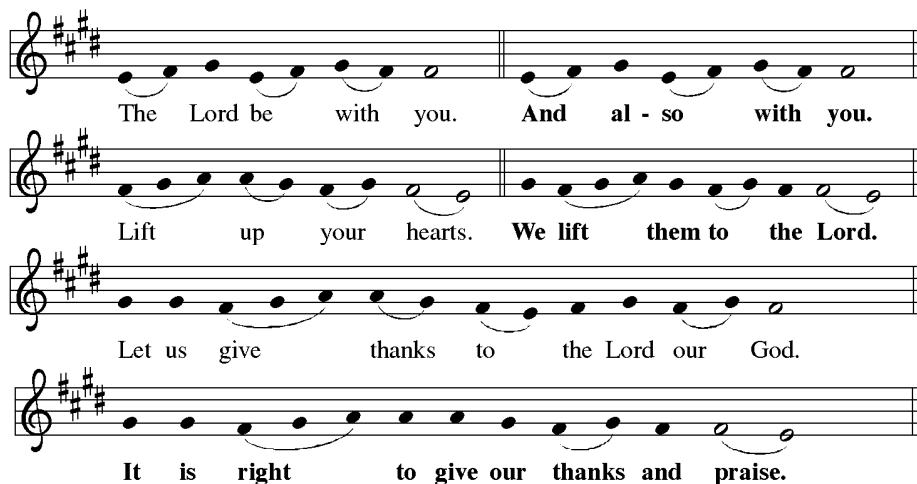
OFFERING PRAYER

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.

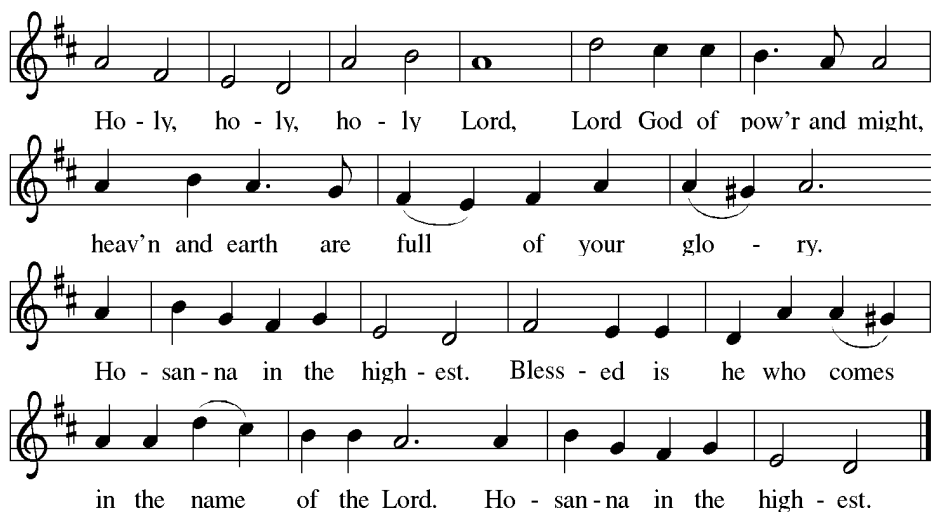
C: Amen.

GREAT THANKSGIVING



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

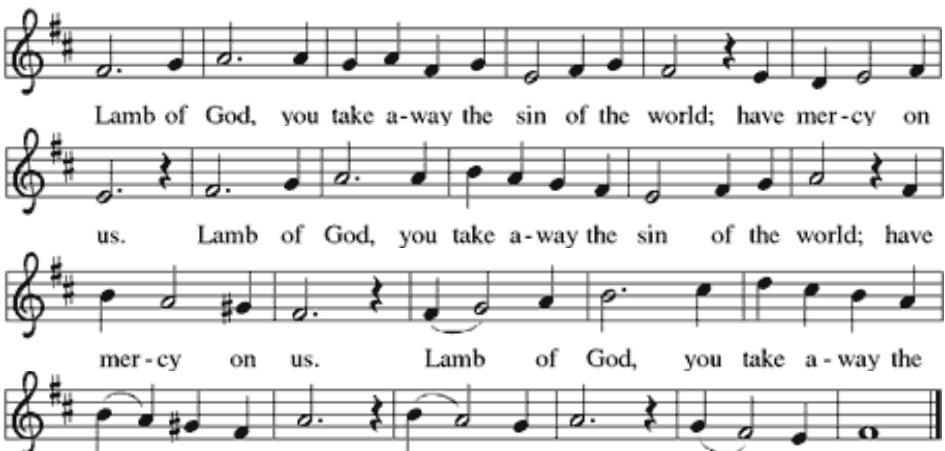
**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.**

**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

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

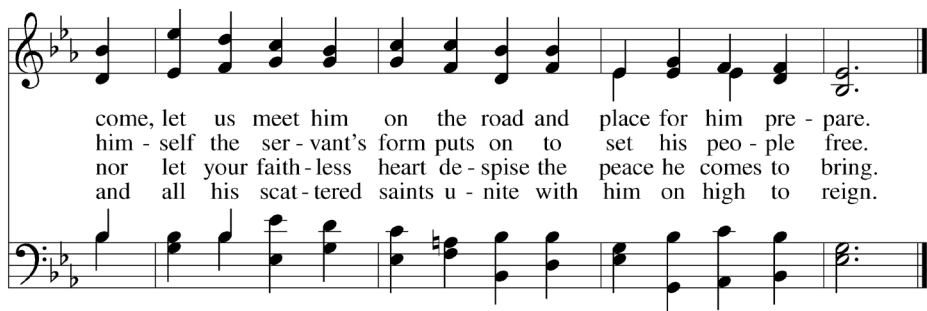
Sit
COMMUNION

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.
 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, ✠ 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

Savior of the Nations, Come St. 1-3, 7.....LBW 28



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, ea - 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

DISMISSAL

- : Go in peace. Keep awake.
- : Thanks be to God.

POSTLUDE

SERVICE ASSISTANTS

Ushers: Charles Luppert, Larry and Donna Britton, Rhonda Koch, Sylvia McCarty, Larry Solomon; **Lay Assistant:** Georgette Copp; **Comm. Assist.:** Fred Harbaugh; **Altar Guild:** Jody Fullmer, Jeannie Bower **Greeters/Presenters:** Dave and Rita Strickler; **Cantor:** Bob Schweppenheiser
Flower Delivery: Susan Bryan

IN BLESSED MEMORY

The Altar Flowers are given to the Glory of God and in honor of Michael Miller's birthday with love Mom!

The Basket of Flowers is given to the Glory of God and in living and loving 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 with a congregational member. *We hope to see you again.*

This morning we welcome Pastor John McNassor.

Immediately following worship, we will be decorating the church. **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.*

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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.

MESSIAH LUTHERAN CHURCH

JARED GIST, ORGANIST

324 South Howard Street | South Williamsport, PA 17702

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

Promises Made Real

Dreams are delicate things, often hanging in our minds only long enough to evaporate in the morning like dew on the grass. Yet dreams can also endure and shape the arc of social movements and the identities of people near and far. Joseph has the rare privilege of an *angelic* dream, of all things—a visitation from a divine messenger, beckoning a change of heart and a change of direction for him and the person he loves.

It is no small thing to change direction in life, especially when family expectations and social norms can make life harder than it needs to be. Yet, Joseph and Mary do a remarkable thing as they face uncertainty: They trust God's promise that something incredible is about to happen. They take the angel's words to heart and lean into the possibility of God's Holy Spirit doing something neither of them expected.

Joseph and Mary are at a precipice, a pivot point, a threshold, a new beginning. Isaiah's language reminds us of the relationship that stands at the center of this divine arrival: God is with us, God is with humanity, God is with (and in) the world! *Emmanuel!*

We stand at a similar threshold every time God gathers us in worship. In word and sacrament, God's promise unfolds anew, birthing love and grace in our lives. Such mercy may seem like a fever dream, a vanishing vision, an impossibility. Yet it is the very thing that undergirds our lives of faith, turning us time and again to what is most important: God's promises fulfilled. As God chose to be with Mary and Joseph, God has chosen to be with us, as we together bear witness to the Spirit who brings about a world where sin is forgiven and God is ever near.

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