



Church At Home

St. Timothy's Lutheran Church – Pembroke, Ontario
Advent IV **December 21, 2025**

Prayer of the Day

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. Amen.

The Holy Gospel: Matthew 1:18-25

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 with child from the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. 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. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: "Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel," which means, "God is with us." When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife, but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus.

Homily

I greet you in the name of Jesus: the Gift of Love! Amen.

Recently, I sat at my desk at home and counted the days left before the upcoming special days: there were three days before Sunday morning and six days before Christmas Eve. Advent is nearly finished and Christmas is just around the corner. Saying this, I hope I did not put any added pressure on any of you.

We come to the fourth week in Advent all wound up either ready or not ready for Christmas. We are ready for Christmas when our heart is hungry for the Messiah to be born. We are ready for Christmas the way a woman is ready to give birth when she is a week past her due date. We are ready but we still must wait.

As we waited in this season of Advent, we encountered pictures of the world as a place where the wolf, lamb, leopard, lion, calf, kid and little child will all be able to play together in peace. We see a picture of an arid wilderness blossoming with vegetation. We have been told there will be a road through the desert: level and smooth, easy to travel, that will be provided for all who will be coming to the house of God to learn about God.

This will be all possible because, even though it looked like the house of Israel had no life left in it, a shoot would come forth from the stump of Jesse, the house of David. This shoot would be clothed in righteousness and faithfulness and the Spirit of the Lord will be upon them, the spirit of wisdom and understanding and all will come to see him as the weak will be made strong, the blind will see, the deaf will hear, the lame will walk, and the mute will sing his praises. This has been our Advent thus far.

And again, we heard this morning another familiar text from Isaiah. We find ourselves once again listening in on the conversation between the prophet (or God through the prophet) and Ahaz, king of Judah.

The conversation does not go well. Ahaz is a king who is in trouble. He wants to enter into an alliance with Assyria, the largest, most powerful army in the region. He feels they are about to invade some of the countries neighbouring Judah. God wants to give King Ahaz a tangible sign to prove to him that God is with him. Most of us would love to have a sign that God was with us. But not King Ahaz. True to form, King Ahaz tries to wiggle out of trusting God. He tells Isaiah that he does not want a sign because he does not want to test God.....he refuses to trust God.....to which Isaiah loses his patience, and informs Ahaz he is getting a sign whether he likes it or not! The sign is that a child will be born who will be given the name Immanuel, meaning "God is with us."

No one knows for sure who this child was. Some scholars guessed it was a child of Isaiah's yet to be born. By the time that child is 12, the alliance between the kingdoms of Israel and Syria will no longer be a problem.

Matthew remembers the words of Isaiah and reinterpreted it with his own context. An angel urged Joseph to take Mary as his wife, in spite of the appearance of unfaithfulness. For the child she is bearing is the child of God. And the name once taken as symbolic now becomes the name that incarnates the identity of Immanuel: God with us.

The place where these two stories intersect is this: the word of God delivered to Isaiah is the proclamation that God will keep God's promises. The promise of new hope and life that will come through the child born to Mary is one that is given to all people. God will keep this promise, too.

We put our trust in big things. You know what they are; I don't need to name them. We want big earnings.....even the council comments on the small return on our investments. We want big things because we want to feel safe. Big is better is common wisdom, God needs nothing more than an ordinary baby to carry out the promises.

The beauty of the promise of Christmas is found in the fact that we may not ask for a baby but this child will be more than enough to meet the needs of our world. The beauty of this promise is found in the idea that we may not get what we want but we will always be given what we need. The beauty of this promise containing all promises is the knowledge that God comes – no matter what! God promises to come. God comes again and again and again to us. We need to do nothing but open our hearts and receive this gift.

My friends in Christ. The promise to Joseph was not one of long life, easy living, a country club home and big car. Joseph was guaranteed only one thing, the same thing that was promised to Ahaz by the prophet Isaiah: the child will be named Emmanuel and through his life the promise of God's presence among us will be revealed. Sometimes that is hard to believe. Sometimes that promise and that message seem overwhelmed by a world full of bad news.

Christmas invites us to live in the mystery of God's constant presence. We don't need to look to the highest heaven to find a sign. But bend low, bend down to the manger and there we will see all the mystery and power of God wrapped in swaddling clothes. 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.

Benediction

The Lord bless you and keep you,
The Lord's face shine upon you and be gracious unto you,
The Lord look upon you with favour and give you (+) peace. Amen.

Prayers used by permission by Augsburg Fortress – Sundays and Seasons

STTLC Communiqué

In Our Prayers Today.....Mike Harrington, Lila Martinat, Irlavere Tubbe, Bobby Keuhl, Adele Krieger, Tracy Schori and Christa Reitlingshoefer.

Come and Worship the Newborn King With Us!

CHRISTMAS EVE December 24th

4:00 and 7:00 pm Candlelight Holy Communion Service

CHRISTMAS DAY December 25th – No Service

First Sunday after Christmas

December 28th 9:30 am Holy Communion

Please note the early Christmas Eve Service this year is at 4:00 pm.

The 2026 Offering Envelopes are available at the back of the church. If you can deliver any, please do so. Thank you.

Year-end Donations – last day for offerings and/or donations to be received and to be credited to 2025 taxation year is Sunday, December 28th.