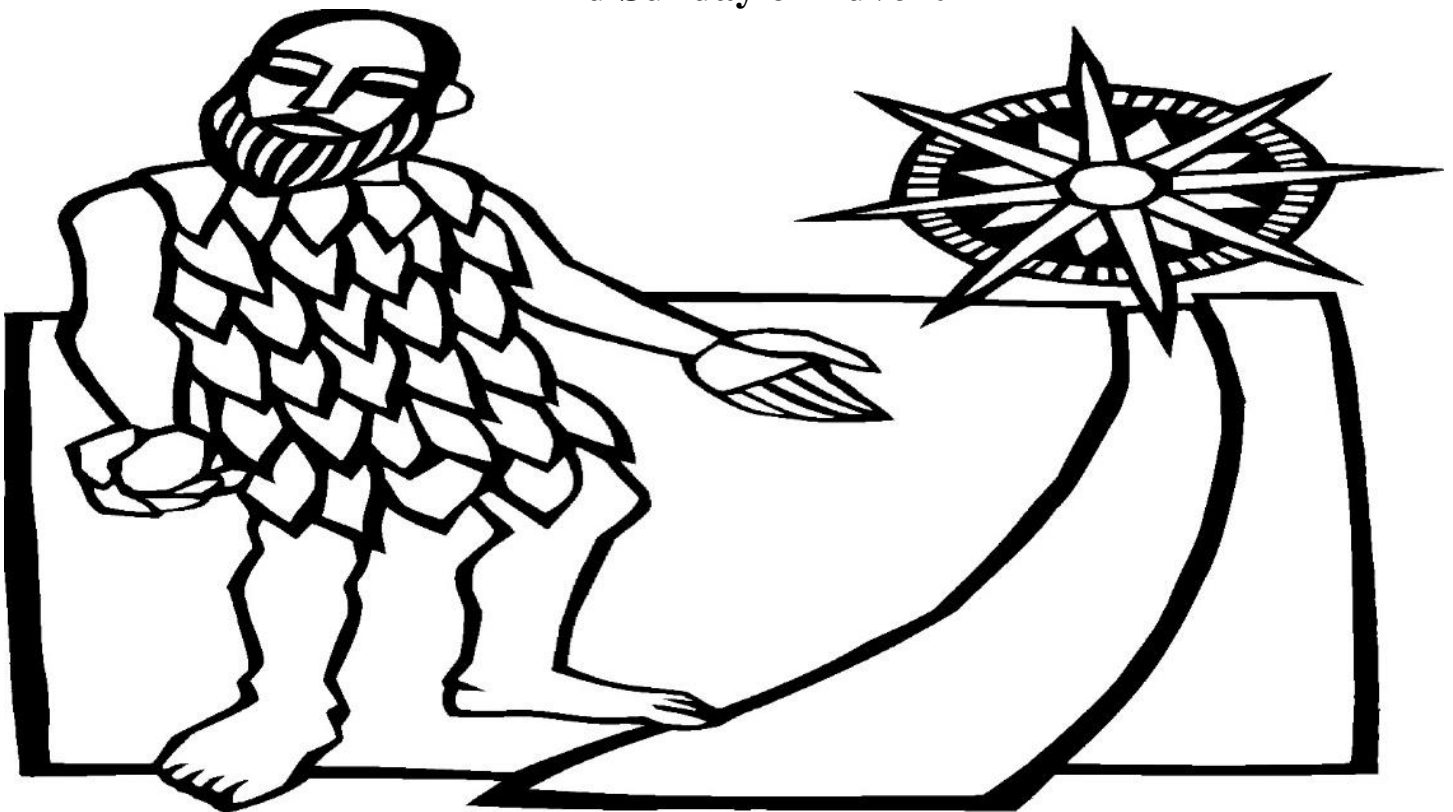


Hope Lutheran Church
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Grace Lutheran Church
204 North Main Street Columbia City, Indiana 46725
Phone: 260-244-7118 Fax: 260-248-2138
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Reverend Matthew Converse, Pastor
Kirsten Jines, Preschool Director
Joyce Dubach, Organist
December 14, 2025
Third Sunday of Advent



Introduction to the day

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.

Food pantry need: cereal and soup
Attendance for December 7, 2025 - 33

PRELUDE

please stand if you are able.

GATHERING *The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God.*

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

All may make the sign of the cross, the sign that is marked at baptism, as the presiding minister begins.

Blessed be the holy Trinity, ✠ one God,
whose home is heaven and earth,
whose salvation is sure.

Amen.

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

Silence is kept for reflection.

Long-expected God,
**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.**

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.

Amen.

GATHERING SONG

Now the Heavens Start to Whisper



- 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.

Text: Mary Louise Bringle, b. 1953

Music: SUO GÂN, Welsh melody

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GREETING

During this time, the presiding minister and the assembly greet each other.

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

And also with you.

Lighting the Advent Wreath

THIRD SUNDAY - PREPARE for the Light

Responsive Litany

'Advent is a time to prepare.

Prepare the way of the Lord.

Advent is a time to prepare our eyes to see the light of Christ.

Prepare the way of the Lord.

Advent is a time to prepare our hearts to receive the Word of Christ.

Prepare the way of the Lord.

Advent is a time to prepare to share the joy of Christ.

Prepare the way of the Lord.

Advent is a time to embrace the promise of Christ.

Prepare for Jesus, the Light of the World.

Candle Lighting

This morning we light three candles. The first candle reminds us that Advent is a time to wait. The second candle reminds us that Advent is also a time to watch. The third candle teaches us that Advent is a time to prepare. We prepare ourselves in heart, soul, and mind to welcome Jesus, the Light of the World.

Closing Prayer

Let us pray, **God in heaven, help us to be people who wait on you, watch for you, and with the help of your spirit, prepare for you. Continue to shine your light in our lives as we look at all you have done, all you are doing, and all that you will do. Amen.**

LIGHTING OF ADVENT WREATH

Jesus, the Light of the World

Congregational Part

ELDERKIN

GEORGE D. ELDERKIN

(Sing twice)

We'll walk in the light, beau-ti - ful
light, come, where the dew-drops of mer-cy shine
bright, O, shine all a-round us by day and by
night, Je - sus, the light of the world.

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PRAYER OF THE DAY

Let us pray.

A brief silence is kept before the prayer.

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.

Amen.

The assembly is seated.

WORD *God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching, and song.*

FIRST READING: Isaiah 35:1-10

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.

⁴ Say 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.”

⁵ Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,
and the ears of the deaf shall be opened;

⁶ then 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;

⁷ the 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.

⁸ A 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.

⁹ No 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.
¹⁰ And 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.
The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

PSALM: Psalm 146:5-10

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 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.**
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!

SECOND READING: James 5:7-10

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.
The word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION



GOSPEL: Matthew 11:2-11

The holy gospel according to Matthew.

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.”

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

The assembly is seated.

SERMON

Silence for reflection follows the sermon.

HYMN OF THE DAY

(ELW 264)

. Prepare the Royal Highway

Text: Frans Mikael Franzén, 1772-1847; tr. *Lutheran Book of Worship*

Music: Swedish folk tune, 17th cent.

CREED

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.*
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

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.

A brief silence.

God of power and mercy, we praise you for Jesus and his acts of healing and liberation. Lead us to proclaim the good news from generation to generation, that all may place their hope in you. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

When lands are parched and dry, bring rain and snow; where wilderness is barren, sow seeds of life. Fill the lands with trees that grow, plants that flower, and creatures that thrive, as nature proclaims the wonder of your works. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

When there is injustice or corruption among nations and leaders, root it out. Turn their attention to inequity and the cries of the poor. Instill a deeper sense of compassion and care in all who govern. God of grace,
hear our prayer.

When bodies weaken and hearts grow fearful, speak your blessing. In uncertain times, remind us of the promise spoken to our ancestors in faith. God of grace,
hear our prayer.

When people are imprisoned or held captive, break the chains and offer release. Strengthen the work of the church in restorative justice, breaking cycles of poverty, and welcoming the immigrant. God of grace,
hear our prayer.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

As we await your coming, we give thanks for the faithful who have lived and died in faith. May their boldness of faith inspire our witness and work. God of grace,
hear our prayer.

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

PEACE

The presiding minister and the assembly greet each other in the peace of the risen Christ.

The peace of Christ be with you always.
And also with you.

The people may greet one another with a sign of Christ's peace, and may say, "Peace be with you," or similar words.

The assembly is seated.

MEAL *God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ.*

OFFERING

(ELW 253)

. **He Came Down**

Text: Cameroon traditional

Music: Cameroon traditional; arr. John L. Bell, b. 1949

OFFERING PRAYER

Let us pray.

God of abundance, we bring before you the precious fruits of your creation, and with them our very lives. Teach us patience and hope as we care for all those in need until the coming of your Son, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

GREAT THANKSGIVING DIALOGUE

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.

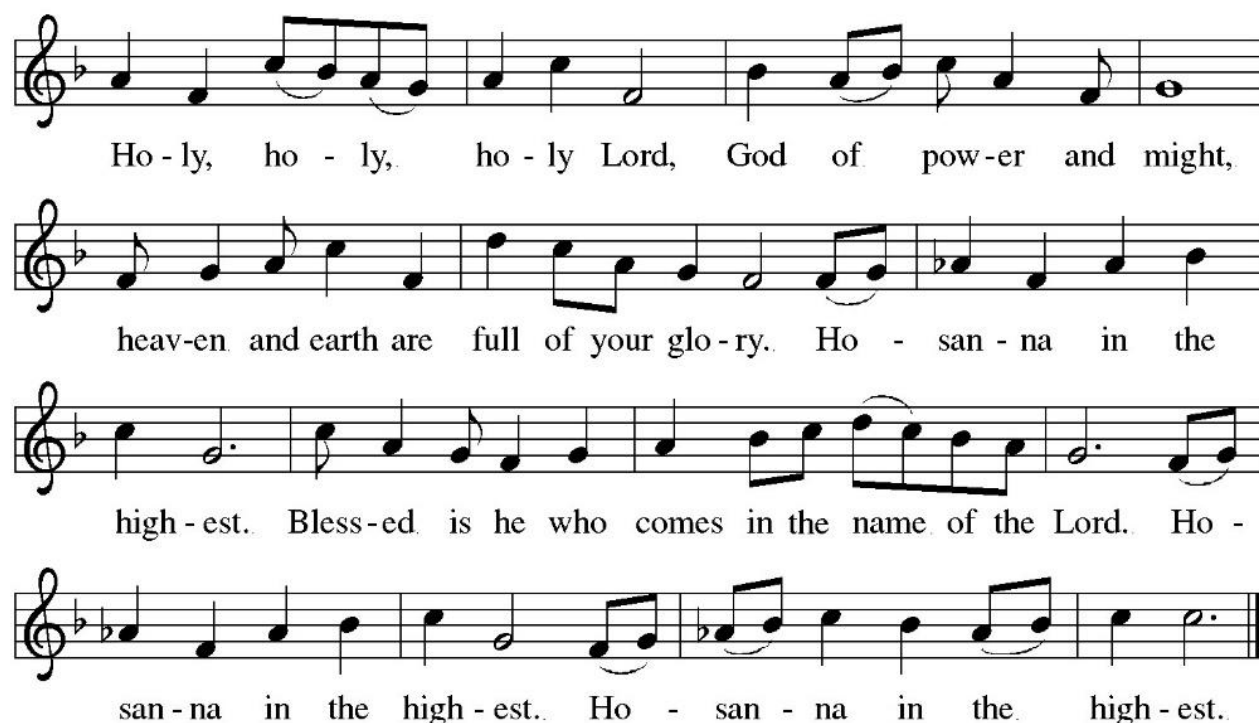
It is right to give our thanks and praise.

Preface

It is indeed right, our du - ty and our joy,
that we should at all times and in all places give thanks and praise to you,
al - mighty and merciful God, through our Sav - ior Je - sus Christ.
You comforted your people with the promise of the Re - deem - er,
through whom you will also make all things new
in the day when he comes to judge the world in righ - teous-ness.
And so, with all the choirs of an - gels,
with the church on earth and the hosts of heav - en,
we praise your name and join their un - end - ing hymn:

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Holy, Holy, Holy



Thanksgiving at the Table

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 his 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 him all glory and honor is yours,
Almighty Father, with the Holy Spirit,
in your holy Church,
both now and forever.

Amen

Lord's Prayer

Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray.

**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.

COMMUNION

When giving the bread and cup, the communion ministers say

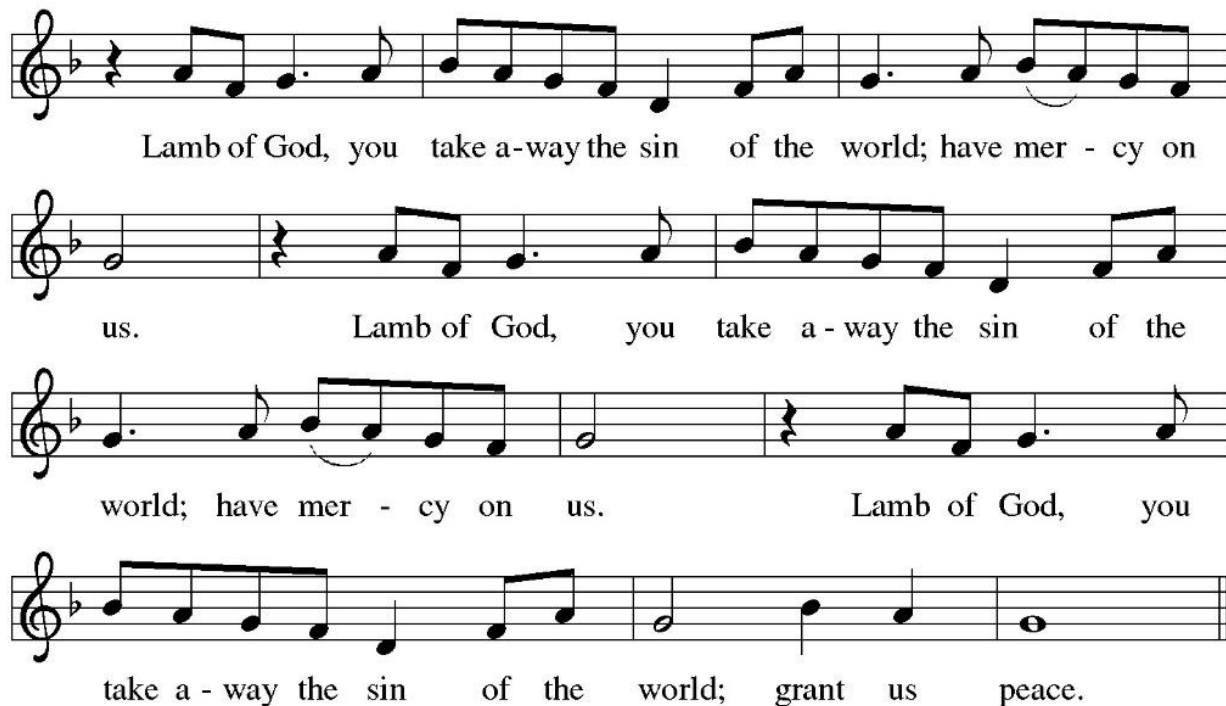
The body of Christ, given for you.

The blood of Christ, shed for you.

and each person may respond **Amen.**

The ministers commune either after or before others commune.

COMMUNION SONG



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.

COMMUNION SONG

(ELW 737)

HE COMES TO US AS ONE UNKNOWN

Text: Timothy Dudley-Smith, b. 1926

Music: C. Hubert H. Parry, 1848-1918

Prayer after Communion

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.

Amen.

Sending *God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world.*

Blessing

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.

Amen.

Sending Song

Freedom Is Coming

1 Oh, free - dom, oh, free - dom, oh,
1 Free-dom is com-ing. Free-dom is

free - dom.
com - ing. Free-dom is com - ing. Oh, yes, I

free - dom, oh, free - dom, oh,
know. Free-dom is com - ing. Free-dom is

free - dom.
com - ing. Free-dom is com - ing. Oh, yes, I

yes, I know. Oh, yes, I know. Oh,

know. Oh, oh, yes, I know. Oh, oh, yes, I

yes, I know. Oh,

know. Oh, oh, yes, I know. Oh, yes, I

yes, I know. Oh, yes, I know. Oh,

know. Oh, oh, yes, I know. Oh, oh, yes, I

yes, I know. Oh,

know. Oh, oh, yes, I know. Oh, yes, I know.

2 Oh, Jesus.
Jesus is coming.
Oh, yes, I know.

Text: South African; transc. *Freedom Is Coming*, 1984

Music: FREEDOM IS COMING, South African; transc. *Freedom Is Coming*

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Dismissal

Go in peace. Keep awake. **Thanks be to God.**

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ANNOUNCEMENT

BREAD LOAF OFFERING - DECEMBER – The Center For Whitley County Youth

- Food Pantry needs, with the colder weather the need for Soup increases. While we still need Cereal and Peanut Butter, we could also use Soup as well.
- December's Bread Loaf Offering will be going to "The Center For Whitley County Youth". The Center has served the youth of Whitley county for the past 20 years and has served over 10,000 students. Flyers and information will be available in the Parish Hall. If you have any questions, see Joe Freiburger
- The presents are to be under the tree by December 17. May the love that is Christmas live in your heart this Holiday Season.
- The attendance for weekly Midweek Advent services in the past has been very poor. This year we will have one midweek Advent Service on Tuesday December 16th at 6:00pm. This will be a Soup and Salad carry in for both Hope and Grace in the Parish Hall at Grace. You can bring in your favorite Soup, Salad or home made bread items and we will have a devotional in the Parish Hall as we eat. The church will be providing drinks. Please plan on attending and having some great fellowship.
- **Holiday Service Location and Time**
Last year there was concern that we did not have a late Christmas Eve Service. We have brought that back this year.
Christmas Eve 7pm Grace no communion
9pm Hope no communion
11pm Grace no communion

Notes

Weekly Agenda at Grace Lutheran Church

Monday December 15, 2025

Helping hands 12:30 pm

AA 7:30 pm

Tuesday December 16, 2025

T.O.P.S 9:30 am

Wednesday December 17, 2025

Men's Breakfast 8 am

Food Pantry 12 pm

Food Vouchers 4 pm

Thursday December 18, 2025

Pre-k Christmas Party 9:30 am

Pre-k Christmas Party 1:30 pm

AA 7:30 pm

Al-non 7:30 pm

Friday December 19, 2025

Pastor's Day Off

Pre-k Christmas Party 9:30 am

Food Pantry 12 pm

Pre-k Christmas Party 1:30 pm

Saturday December 20, 2025

Krider Christmas 12 pm

Sunday December 21, 2025

Worship @ Hope 8:15 am

Worship @ Grace 10:00 am

Fellowship 11:15 am

Straub Christmas 1 pm

We have new sign-up sheets in the parish hall, for coffee hour. Coffee hour will be after church service, for anyone that would like to stay.