

St. Paul Lutheran Church
of Stillwater, Minnesota
December 14, 2025
Third Sunday of Advent



Your presence at worship is important to God and to us! Whether you are a first-time visitor, frequent participant, neighbor, member, or friend, please take a moment as you prepare for worship to share some information on the "Welcome to Worship" card included with your bulletin. Place it in the offering plate at the time the offering is received.

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.

Many of our worship materials are taken from the red Evangelical Lutheran Worship (ELW). Page numbers are located in the front half of the book, and hymn numbers are located in the back half of the book.

The assembly **speaks** or **sings** the bold responses.

GATHERING

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

Prelude	"White Christmas"	Jazz Band
Advent Invocation		

Happy are they who have the God of Jacob for their help,
whose hope is in the Lord their God.

The Lord sets the captive free and cares for the stranger.

**The Lord sustains the orphan and widow,
but frustrates the way of the wicked.**

(Continued on the next page.) 1

The Lord shall reign forever.

Your God, O Zion, throughout all generations.

Let us pray . . .

God of joy,
our hearts quicken with excitement at the approach of
Jesus' birth.

May our lives point to yours, as John's did,
and may our souls magnify you, as Mary's did.

Help us remain patient,
listening for your Word and Spirit as we prepare for
Christmas.

With hope, peace, joy, and love we pray.

Amen.

Gathering Song

ELW hymn 267

Verses 1 and 2.

Extended Introduction by the Jazz Band

"Joy To The World"

Greeting

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.

Prayer of the Day

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.



Singing Our Faith

The 12 Days of Christmas

"O Little Town of Bethlehem" - Jazz Band

Narrators

Kam Benyahia & Julian Galvin

Partridge in a Pear Tree

Janine Siverson

Two Turtle Doves

Jennifer Braun

Three French Hens

Jenny Brelje

Four Calling Birds

Kristin Nelson

Five Golden Rings

Karen Celski

Six Geese a-Laying

Chris Shivers

Seven Swans a-Swimming

Izzy Shivers

Eight Maids a-Milking

Mugs DeFore

Nine Ladies Dancing

Kristin Nelson

Ten Lord's a-Leaping

Jerry Schlagel

Eleven Pipers Piping

Jenny Brelje

Twelve Drummers Drumming

Chuck Clausen



Please join us in singing The Twelve Days of Christmas!

Special Music

“Away In A Manger”

Jazz Band

WORD

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

First Reading

Pew Bible: Old Testament Page 663

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.

At the conclusion:

Word of God, word of life.

Thanks be to God.

Gospel Acclamation

“We Three Kings”

Jazz Band

Gospel Reading

Pew Bible: New Testament Page 11

Matthew 11:2-6

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.

The gospel is introduced:

The holy gospel according to Matthew.

Glory to you, O Lord.

At the conclusion:

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Sermon

Pastor Nathan Baker-Trinity

Silence for reflection follows the sermon.

Hymn of the Day

"We Are Waiting for Jesus"

1 We are wait - ing for Je - sus; Je - sus brings peace.
2 We are wait - ing for Je - sus; Je - sus brings peace.

We are wait - ing for Je - sus; Je - sus brings peace.
We are wait - ing for Je - sus; Je - sus brings peace.

Sun of jus - tice, shine up - on us; we are trust - ing in your prom - ise.
Lov - ing Shep - herd, walk be - side us; stir our hearts, and gent - ly guide us.

We are wait - ing for Je - sus; Je - sus brings peace.
We are wait - ing for Je - sus; Je - sus brings peace.

Prayers of Intercession

After each prayer:

God of grace,

hear our prayer.

At the conclusion:

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 peace of Christ be with you always.

And also with you.

All are invited to greet one another with a sign of Christ's peace.



MEAL

God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ.

Offering

"What Child Is This"

Jazz Band

Our offering is a collection of money for the church's mission, including the care of those in need, as a sign of the giving of our whole selves in grateful response for all God's gifts. Your offering and "Welcome to Worship" card may be placed in the offering plate. The QR code on the right may be used if you wish to give electronically.



Offering Prayer

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

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.

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy . . .

. . . we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

(Continued on the next page.) 6

*Angels we have heard on high,
sweetly singing o'er the plains,
and the mountains in reply,
echoing their joyous strains.*

***Gloria in excelsis Deo;
gloria in excelsis Deo.***

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.

Let us proclaim the mystery of faith:

Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

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.

Come, Lord Jesus.

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.

Come, Holy Spirit.

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

Amen.

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us.

**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.**





Communion

We celebrate at an open communion table. All who hear our Lord's invitation are welcome to participate. Receive the bread first with an open hand and eat immediately, followed by the juice (white) or wine (red). Gluten-free bread is available at the front end of the center aisle. Please indicate to an usher if you need to receive communion from your pew. Children who have received age-appropriate instruction are welcome to commune. If you prefer instead to receive a blessing, please indicate by crossing your arms over your shoulders.

*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.

"Hark! The Heralded Angels Sing"

Prayer After Communion

God for whom we wait, in this meal you give us a foretaste of that day when the hungry will be fed with good things. Send us forth to make known your deeds and to proclaim the greatness of your name, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

SENDING

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

Announcements

Blessing

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord's face shine on you with grace and mercy.

The Lord look upon you with favor and ☩ give you peace.

Amen.

Sending Song

ELW Hymn 290

Extended Introduction by the Jazz Band

"Go Tell It On The Mountain"

Dismissal

Go in peace. Serve the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Postlude

"Deck the Halls"

Jazz Band



A Special Thank You!

St. Paul Lutheran would like to extend a special thank
you to the members of our Christmas Jazz Band!

Alto Sax - Andy Peterson & Julia Peterson

Tenor Sax - Jordan Kirchner

Bari Sax - TJ Chapman

Trumpet - Riley MacDonald & Kyle Burbey

Trombone - Steve Herzog & Pastor Nathan Baker-Trinity

Piano - Karen Hillmann

Bass - Aaron Hammerman

Drums - Bryan Burbey

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DAILY PRAYER

For the Human Family



○ God of all, with wonderful diversity of languages and cultures you created all people in your image. Free us from prejudice and fear, that we may see your face in the faces of people around the world; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

CONNECTIONS WITH THE LITURGY

Isaiah's Prayer



Recalling the promises of the miraculous presence of God, every Sunday we pray for all those in need. Following ancient practice, Evangelical Lutheran Worship encourages us to pray regularly “for the poor, oppressed, sick, bereaved, lonely, and for all who suffer in body, mind, or spirit.” (see ELW page 105) We pray for the dream of Isaiah's ancient poem to be realized today.

CATECHISM CONNECTION

Luther's Human Rights



That each person is singularly loved by God is at the heart of the good news of Jesus Christ. Modern democratic values express this conviction, and many of these values originate with the Christian reformers of 500 years ago, including Martin Luther. In his teaching in the Small Catechism on the Fourth Petition of the Lord's Prayer, "Give us today our daily bread," Luther chronicles a remarkable list of what we pray for in every human life: "Everything included in the necessities and nourishment for our bodies, such as food, drink, clothing, shoes, house, farm, fields, livestock, money, property, an upright spouse, upright children, upright members of the household, upright and faithful rulers, good government, good weather, peace, health, decency, honor, good friends, faithful neighbors, and the like."

UPCOMING COMMEMORATIONS

John of the Cross, renewer of the church, died 1591

Sunday, December 14, 2025

John was a monk of the Carmelite religious order who met Teresa of Àvila when she was working to reform the Carmelite Order and return it to a stricter observance of its rules. He followed Teresa's lead and encouraged others to follow her reform. He was imprisoned when he encountered opposition to the reform. His writings, like Teresa's, reflect a deep interest in mystical thought and meditation. In one of John's poems, "The Spiritual Canticle," he cried, "Oh, that my griefs would end! Come, grant me thy fruition full and free!"

Las Posadas (LLC)

Tuesday, December 16, 2025

This celebration, long popular in Mexico, takes its name from the "posadas," or lodgings, sought by Mary and Joseph in Bethlehem. Their search is reenacted in a neighborhood, unsuccessfully, until finally they are welcomed in, and a party commences.

Katharina von Bora Luther, renewer of the church, died 1552

Saturday, December 20, 2025

Born to an impoverished nobleman, when Katharina (Katie) was five her mother died and she was sent to live in a convent. She later took vows as a nun, but around age twenty-four she and several other nuns who were influenced by the writings of Martin Luther left the convent. Six children were born to Katie and Martin. Though initially Luther felt little affection for Katie, she proved herself a gifted household manager and became a trusted partner. She was so influential that Luther took to calling her "my lord Katie."

GOSPEL MESSAGE

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.