

The Season of Advent

The Will to Dream



In this time of upheaval, we find trust is fragile, truth contested, and spaces between us feel harder to cross. Divisions stretch far and wide. The constant churn of political tension leaves many feeling anxious and uncertain. Community feels strained, and connection is harder to come by. Hearts are weary, and souls unsettled, and people of all perspectives are searching—not just for answers, but for understanding, healing, and hope. This ache is not weakness; it is a holy longing—a sacred desire for a world made whole. From this longing comes the will to dream—a persistent courage to imagine, resist, and rebuild a better world.

Sunday, December 7, 2025

All Saints Lutheran Church
Lilburn, Georgia

GATHERING

Prelude & Welcome

Confession & Forgiveness

The assembly stands in body or spirit.

In the name of the Holy Trinity, ✠ the Lover, the Beloved, and Love.

Amen.

We gather together in this place:

prophets and dreamers, singers and poets,

we who dare to imagine a world renewed;

we who dare to dream God's dream.

Let us gather in honest confession, trusting in God's promise of love and forgiveness:

God of hope,

you call us to lay down our weapons of war,

to transform them into tools of growth and gardening.

You created us to be gardeners,

people who tend to the growth of creation around us.

Help us abandon our violent ways

and choose peaceful acts of justice and mercy.

May we sow seeds of love in place of fear, kindness in place of cruelty.

And when we are tempted to pick up weapons again,

when our neighbors draw our wrath,

remind us that each person we encounter is made in your image,

beloved and worthy of care.

Let hope grow up from these gardens of faith.

Amen.

Beloved, God's promise is sure, through Jesus Christ we have been forgiven
and freed to proclaim expectation with Isaiah!

God's redemption is near!

Through tears and through trials,

we hold fast to our hope.

Do not fear, for God is faithful.

Our redemption rises with the dawn.

Come and worship, all you who dream and wait.

We have come to wonder and praise.

Gathering Hymn

Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus



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

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.**

Advent Candle Lighting

Mary Kay Kates

The birth of Jesus has been told and retold a thousand times and in a thousand ways. Its impact cannot be contained in any one perspective. But who is telling the story changes how we hear it, how we imagine it, how we experience it. We light the candle of hope because hope creates a path for a new, unknown story to unfold.

What we often see this side of history in paintings or nativities is a peaceful still life of the blessed family, Mary, Joseph, and the baby Jesus.

Imagine visiting the newborn infant.

Babies are not always quiet.

If something is wrong or they need attention, they cry out regardless of what anyone else is saying or doing.

Those around the baby must choose to respond to their cries.

The same is true for injustice.

When needs go unmet or injustice occurs, the cries of those affected rise in hopes of being heard by those nearby.

A cry is a call for peace.

Peace in an unfed belly, peace for safety and security, peace to be clean and have dignity.

The infant Jesus broke the silence, crying out to bring peace to the world.

We light the candle of peace because peace requires us to pay attention to the needs of those around us.

Prayer of the Day

God of promises,
your vision for peace stretches our imaginations,
pushing us beyond platitudes
and stirring up the fire of justice in our hearts.

Show us our place and our purpose
in leveling mountains and raising valleys,
in straightening roads and clearing pathways.

We pray as people of anticipation,
who long for peace with anxious energy
as we await the arrival of Christ among us.

Amen.

The assembly is seated.

WORD

First Reading: Malachi 3:1-6

Mary Kay Kates

1 See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple. The messenger of the covenant in whom you delight—indeed, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts. 2 But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears?

For he is like a refiner's fire and like washers' soap; 3 he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the descendants of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, until they present offerings to the Lord in righteousness. 4 Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the Lord, as in the days of old and as in former years.

5 Then I will draw near to you for judgment; I will be swift to bear witness against the sorcerers, against the adulterers, against those who swear falsely, against those who oppress the hired workers in their wages, the widow, and the orphan, against those who thrust aside the alien and do not fear me, says the Lord of hosts.

6 For I the Lord do not change; therefore you, O children of Jacob, have not perished.

Word of God. Word of Life.

Thanks be to God.

Gospel Acclamation

The assembly stands in body or spirit.

Unexpected & Mysterious (ELW, #258, v. 1 only)

**Unexpected and mysterious
is the gentle word of grace.
Ever loving and sustaining
is the peace of God's embrace.
If we falter in our courage
and we doubt what we have known,
God is faithful to console us
as a mother tends her own.**

Gospel Reading: Matthew 3:1-12

The Holy Gospel according to Matthew the 3rd chapter.

Glory to you, O Lord.

1 In those days John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness of Judea, proclaiming, 2 “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.” 3 This is the one of whom the prophet Isaiah spoke when he said,

“The voice of one crying out in the wilderness:

‘Prepare the way of the Lord;

make his paths straight.’ ”

4 Now John wore clothing of camel’s hair with a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. 5 Then Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region around the Jordan were going out to him, 6 and they were baptized by him in the River Jordan, confessing their sins.

7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for his baptism, he said to them, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? 8 Therefore, bear fruit worthy of repentance, 9 and do not presume to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our ancestor,’ for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. 10 Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.

11 “I baptize you with water for repentance, but the one who is coming after me is more powerful than I, and I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. 12 His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and will gather his wheat into the granary, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”

This is the Holy Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

The assembly is seated.

Sermon

Hymn of the Day

The assembly stands in body or spirit.

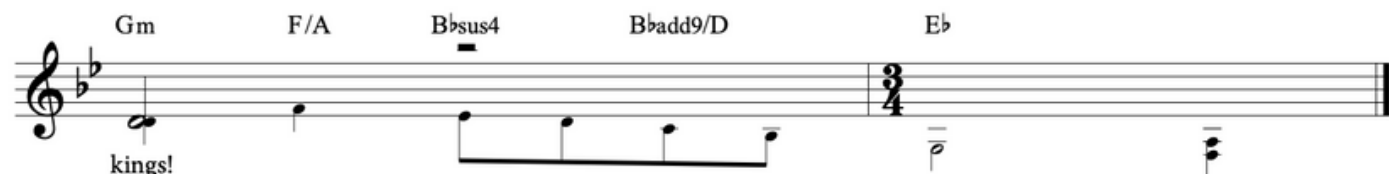
On Jordan's Banks the Baptist's Cry



1 On Jor - dan's banks the Bap - tist's cry an - nounc - es that the Lord is
 2 Then cleansed be ev - 'ry life from sin; make straight the way for God with-
 3 We hail you as our Sav - ior, Lord, our ref - uge and our great re -
 4 Stretch forth your hand, our health re - store, and make us rise to fall no
 5 All praise to you, e - ter - nal Son, whose ad - vent has our free-dom



nigh; a - wake and heark-en for he brings glad ti - dings of the King of
 in, and let us all our hearts pre - pare for Christ to come and en - ter
 ward; with - out your grace we waste a - way like flow'rs that with - er and de-
 more; oh, let your face up - on us shine and fill the world with love di-
 won, whom with the Fa - ther we a - dore, and Ho - ly Spi - rit, ev - er-



kings!
 there.
 cay.
 vine.
 more.

Text: Charles Coffin, 1676-1749; tr. composite
 Music: John Tirro

The Apostles' 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

The assembly is seated.

Mary Kay Kates

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.

The assembly kneels or sits for prayer.

With wisdom and understanding, inspire the faithful around the world. Unite hearts and minds in work to address poverty, access to housing, and equity among peoples. God of grace,

hear our prayer.

With counsel and might, move us to care for creation. As we dream of the day when all creatures will flourish alongside one another, guide us in ways humanity and all creation will mutually thrive. God of grace,

hear our prayer.

With righteousness and faithfulness, encourage nations to live in harmony with one another. We pray for international student and teacher exchanges, for our partner churches, and for the shared mission of Lutheran World Relief and Lutheran Disaster Response. God of grace,

hear our prayer.

With steadfastness and encouragement, strengthen those who have lost hope in the face of grief, depression, or disease). Renew the spirits of those recovering from surgery and medical procedures.

We offer to you now the concerns of our hearts, either silently or aloud.

A brief silence

- *We pray for Robin and Cathy; Faith; Paige; Byron; Joe.*
- *We pray for Kathryn; Ray; Ruth; Todd; Toby; Roger and Kate.*
- *We pray for Flossie; Jim and Sharon; Charlie; Alex; John.*

God of grace,

hear our prayer.

- *We pray for all people of the world impacted by ongoing war, conflict, and violence, especially those caught between Ukraine and Russia; between Israel and Hamas; between Pakistan and Afghanistan; in South Sudan; in Myanmar.*
- *We pray for the cease-fire to hold in Gaza, and for the work of relief agencies.*
- *We pray for schools everywhere, that all students and those who care for them may feel safe and free from fear.*
- *We pray for protection, provision, and justice for immigrants, refugees, asylum seekers, and advocates.*
- *We pray for access to affordable and reliable healthcare.*
- *We pray for justice around the world and here at home, that God may delight when we are creators of justice and joy, compassion, and peace.*

God of grace,

hear our prayer.

With welcome and hospitality, embolden us in our shared ministry to overcome all that divides. In acts of repentance, reconciliation, and reparation, may we serve in the way of Christ. God of grace,

hear our prayer.

With joy and peace, we remember our ancestors in the faith. Fill us with the hope of the Holy Spirit now and into the ages of ages. 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.

The assembly stands in body or spirit.

Peace

The peace of Christ be with you all.

And also with you.

MEAL

Offering & Offering Music

Unexpected & Mysterious (ELW, #258, v. 3 only)

**We are called to ponder mystery
and await the coming Christ,
to embody God's compassion
for each fragile human life.
God is with us in our longing
to bring healing to the earth,
while we watch with joy and wonder
for the promised Savior's birth.**

The assembly stands in body or spirit.

Offering Prayer

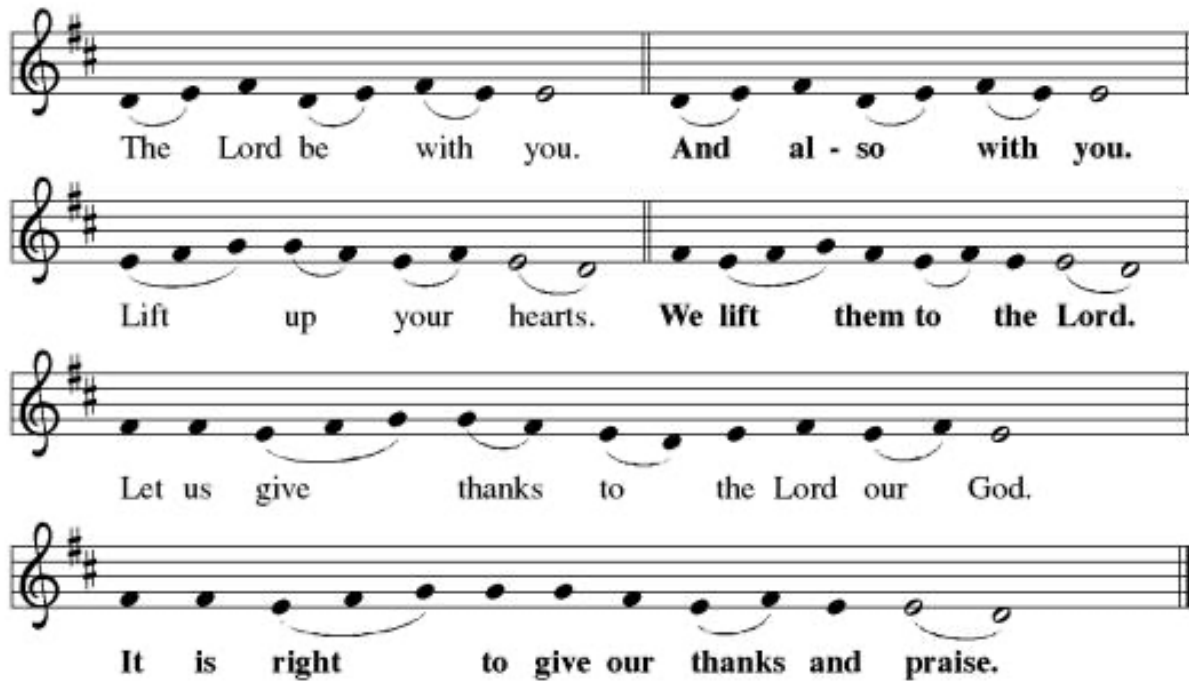
Let us pray.

Holy God, we bring our gifts and offerings to you
because the voices of the prophets remind us
of something bigger, something greater
than any system this world offers us.
We believe when we trust you with our resources,
the kin(g)dom of God comes much closer to reality on earth.
Help us steward these gifts to create abundant life and love.
Amen.

Mary Kay Kates

The Great Thanksgiving

ELW, pg. 107



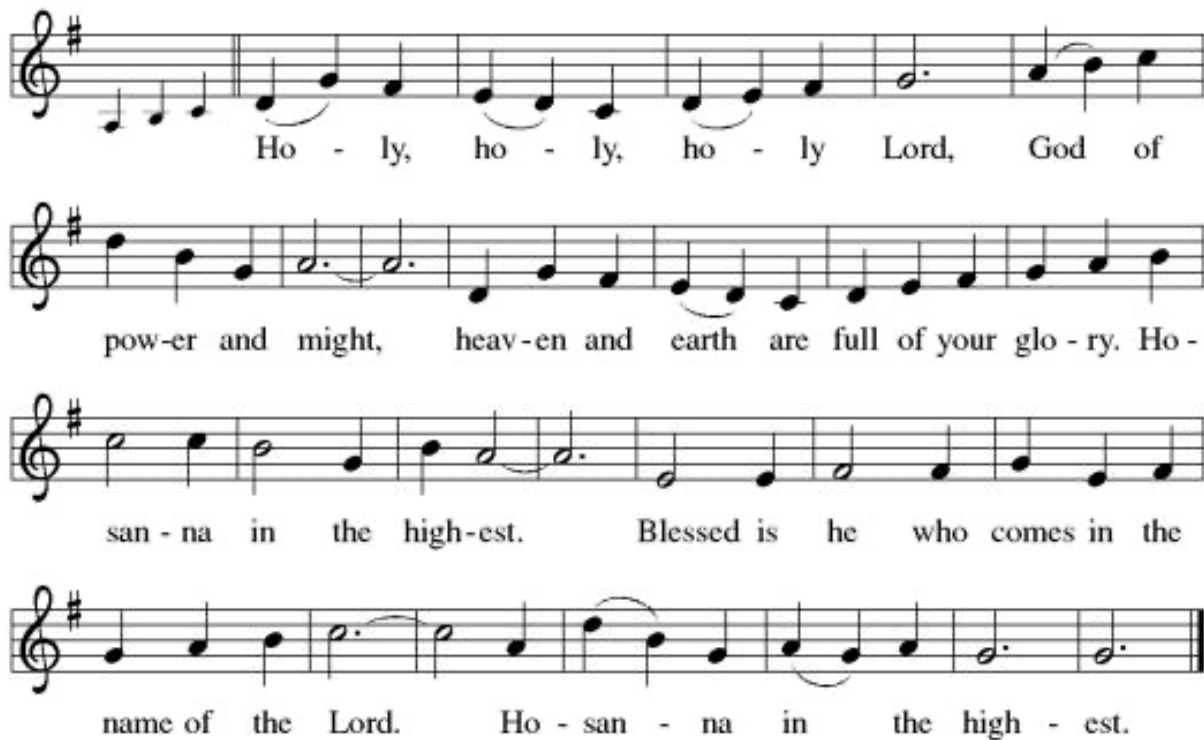
Preface

ELW, pg. 108

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:

Sanctus

ELW, pg. 108



Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of
pow-er and might, heav-en and earth are full of your glo - ry. Ho -
san - na in the high-est. Blessed is he who comes in the
name of the Lord. Ho - san - na in the high - est.

Thanksgiving at the Table

Holy are you, and blessed is your name.

You, O God, never leave us.

You, who came to model a new kind of power
using mercy and not might, love and not hate,
you can reorient us and give us the will to dream once more.
We receive this bread and this cup in the
same spirit that you demonstrated to us
by your words and actions.

On the night you gathered your friends to eat together
in the midst of their fear and your own,
you transformed bread into an element of grace,
you blessed it, broke it, and shared, saying
Take and eat, this is my body broken for you.
Do this for the remembrance of me.

On that same night
you transformed wine into an element of grace,
you blessed, it, poured it, and shared, saying
Take and drink, this is my blood poured out for you.
Do this for the remembrance of me.

Because of these simple and remarkable acts,
we offer ourselves to be your hands and feet,
and we proclaim the mystery of our faith:

Christ was executed. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

Holy God,
we have seen and heard the dreams of the prophets.
We have witnessed the power-defying acts of Jesus.
Thank you for this abundant feast with enough for all to come and be fed.
We ask that you transform these gifts of bread and cup
into sustaining hope and encouragement to live a life full of prophetic imagination.

With confidence, we pray the prayer you taught us to pray, saying:

The Lord's Prayer

**Our Creator, 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.
Amen.**

Lamb of 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.

Invitation to Communion

Here is life.

God is with us.

Come, receive what God has promised.

Communion Hymn

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.

Text: John Helgen, b. 1957

Music: JESUS BRINGS PEACE, John Helgen

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Prayer After Communion

Mary Kay Kates

Creator of all good things, you have fed us with the bread of life and cup of blessing, small in their presentation, yet magnificent in our holy imagination. May the love of the Lord's table accompany us on our journeys from here. **Amen.**

SENDING

Blessing

To embody love is more than sentiment.

It is choosing, every day, to see the worth and good
in ourselves, others, and this world.

So go forth from this place modeling merciful love,
remembering God is love.

Though it may be difficult to understand,
we see what it means modeled in Jesus.

May blessings flow from your mouth as you seek to be love in this world.

Amen.

Sending Hymn

Prepare the Royal Highway



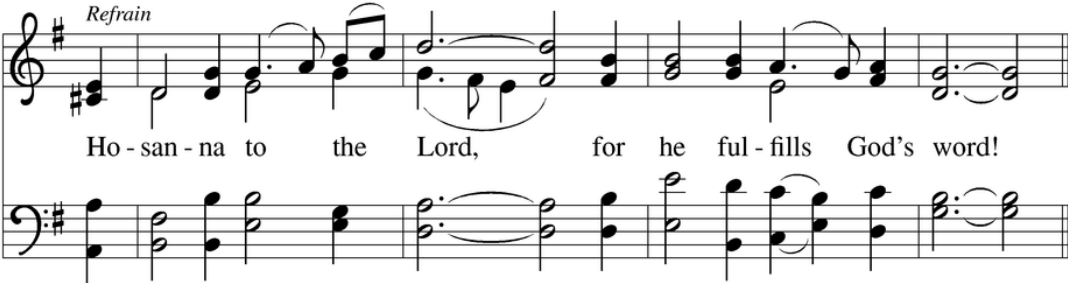
1 Pre - pare the roy - al high - way; the King of kings is near!
2 God's peo - ple, see him com - ing; your own e - ter - nal king!
3 Then fling the gates wide o - pen to greet your prom - ised king!
4 His is no earth - ly king - dom; it comes from heav'n a - bove.



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!

Text: Frans Mikael Franzén, 1772–1847; tr. *Lutheran Book of Worship*
Music: BEREDEN VÄG FÖR HERRAN, Swedish folk tune, 17th cent.
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Dismissal

Go out into the world, embracing the will to dream,
and may the love God has for you warm your soul for the days ahead!

Thanks be to God and we will!