

*Welcome to St. Paul's  
The Lord Bless You as You Worship!*



FOURTH SUNDAY OF  
**ADVENT**

*December 22, 2024*

**St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church**  
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Rev. Lori Nickoloff, Pastor

*Enter to Listen, Exit to Serve*

## WORSHIP NOTES

*Thank you for worshipping with us this morning. We're glad you're here! May you experience God's love through the words you hear and sing, the meal you eat, and the fellowship of God's people.*

**Prayer Requests** If you have a prayer request, please give a note to the ushers or send an email to Pastor Lori.

**Face Masks** Just a friendly reminder...please wear a mask in the building if you have been exposed to someone with COVID-19/experiencing any kind of respiratory or flu-like symptoms. Masks are available on the table in the narthex in case you forget yours at home. Thank you!

**Holy Communion** All are welcome to share in Christ's meal of forgiveness and grace. Children who do not yet commune are welcome to come forward for a blessing. (If you feel your child is ready to receive or have additional questions, please speak with Pastor Lori.) Please come forward at the direction of the ushers. Wine is in the outer rings of the tray. Grape juice is in the center of the tray. Gluten-free bread is available; please indicate your need to the pastor.

**Pew Cushions** Are available on the pew in the back of the sanctuary.

**Hearing Assistance** Individual hearing devices are available at the back of the sanctuary. Please return the device at the end of worship so they can be sanitized.

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## We Worship God

### Welcome

#### Prelude:

*“From Heaven Above to Earth I Come”*

*Flor Peeters*

*The prelude is a time for people to become quiet, to meditate and pray, and to prepare their hearts and minds to worship God. You are invited to pray this prayer to help you transition from the cares and activities of daily life to worshipping the Living God:*

**God of grace, you have given us minds to know you, hearts to love you, and voices to sing your praise. Fill us with your Spirit, that we may celebrate your glory and worship you in spirit and truth, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.**

*(Please rise in body or spirit)*

### Call to Worship

P: You come near to us, O God,

**All: And our hearts leap for joy within us.**

P: Restore us, O God.

**All: Let your face shine, that we might be saved.**

### Confession and Forgiveness

P: We confess our sins before God and one another.

*Pause for silence and reflection.*

P: God who was and is and is to come,

**All: We confess to you and to one another that we have sinned and fallen short in the things we have done to ourselves, to one another and the world as a whole, and in the things we have failed to do for the good of all. Have mercy on us, O God. Wash away the guilt and shame and commit us to making changes to better love ourselves, and to love and serve you, our neighbors, and all that you have made.**

P: Siblings in Christ, our God created us whole and beautiful and loves us unconditionally, and therefore forgives us all our sins, for the sake of Jesus Christ, our savior, our sibling, and our friend. Receive this forgiveness with joy!

**All: Amen.**

## Gathering Hymn:

## Come Thou Long Expected Jesus

#254



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

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

All: **And also with you.**

## Prayer of the Day

P: God of joy,

All: **fill us with gratitude for all the ways you bless us each day. Keep us mindful of your call to be a blessing to others in all that we do and say, that your just will might be done. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.**

*(Please be seated)*

## Lighting of Advent Wreath

R: Just as the psalmist longed for restoration to end the trials of sadness, so we too long for a joy to stir our hearts. But soon, a savior shall be given...

*(light candle 1)*

All: A savior to bring hope...

*(light candle 2)*

R: A savior to deliver peace...

*(light candle 3)*

All: A savior filled with love overflowing...

*(light candle 4)*

R: One who is light shining in the darkness, and the darkness did not—and cannot—overcome it. By this light, the flame of joy, may we all gaze in wonder. No one has seen God, but with great joy, we will see God in the babe in the manger.

Hymn:

*We are Waiting for Jesus*

*ACS #905*



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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## We Hear God's Word

### Prayer for Illumination

A: Speak to us, Lord.

**All: Speak to us in the waiting, the watching, the hoping, the longing, the sorrow, the sighing, the rejoicing. Speak to us by your Word in these Advent days, and walk with us until the day of your coming. Amen.**

— written by Rev. Andy James, First Presbyterian Church of Whitestone, New York, and posted on the [LiturgyLink](#) website.

### Micah 5:2-5a

But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah, who are one of the little clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to rule in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days. Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labor has brought forth; then the rest of his kindred shall return to the people of Israel. And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God. And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth; and he shall be the one of peace.

### Hebrews 10:5-10

Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, “Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body you have prepared for me; in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure. Then I said, ‘See, God, I have come to do your will, O God’ (in the scroll of the book it is written of me).” When he said above, “You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings” (these are offered according to the law), then he added, “See, I have come to do your will.” He abolishes the first in order to establish the second. And it is by God’s will that we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

A: Word of God, Word of life.

**All: Thanks be to God!**

*(Please rise in body or spirit)*

**Gospel Acclamation:** (verse 2 of O Come, O Come, Emmanuel)

*O come, O Wisdom from on high,  
embracing all things far and nigh;  
in strength and beauty come and stay;  
teach us your will and guide our way.  
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel  
shall come to you, O Israel.*

### **The Gospel**

**P:** The Gospel according to Luke.

**All:** **Glory to you, O Lord.**

### **Luke 1:39-55**

In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord." [And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name. His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever."]

**P:** The Gospel of the Lord.

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

*(Please be seated)*

**Sermon**

Rev. Lori Nickoloff

Following the sermon, there is a time of silence for reflection and quiet meditation. Our liturgy is made up not only of words, gestures, and music, but also moments of silence.

As the hymn begins, the assembly stands to sing.

**Hymn of the Day:**

*No Wind at the Window*

ACS#906

1 No wind at the win-dow, no knock on the door;  
 2 "O Mar - y, O Mar - y, don't hide from my face.  
 3 This child must be born that the king - dom might come:  
 4 No pay - ment was prom - ised, no prom - is - es made;

no light from the lamp-stand, no foot on the floor;  
 Be glad that you're fa - vored and filled with God's grace.  
 sal - va - tion for man - y, de - struc - tion for some;  
 no wed - ding was dat - ed, no blue - print dis - played.

no dream born of tired - ness, no ghost raised by fear:  
 The time for re - deem - ing the world has be - gun,  
 both end and be - gin - ning, both mes - sage and sign;  
 Yet Mar - y, con - sent - ing to what none could guess,



just an an - gel and a wom - an and a voice in her ear.  
 and . . . you are re - quest - ed to . . . moth - er God's Son."  
 both . . vic - tor and . . vic - tim, both . . yours and di - vine.  
 re - plied with con - vic - tion, "Tell . . God I say yes."

Text: John L. Bell, b. 1949

Music: COLUMCILLE, Irish melody; arr. John L. Bell

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## Advent Credo

- A: It is not true that creation and the human family are doomed to destruction and loss—
- All:** *This is true: For God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life;*
- A: It is not true that we must accept inhumanity and discrimination, hunger and poverty, death and destruction—
- All:** *This is true: I have come that they may have life, and that abundantly.*
- A: It is not true that violence and hatred should have the last word, and that war and destruction rule forever—
- All:** *This is true: Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder, his name shall be called wonderful councilor, mighty God, the Everlasting, the Prince of peace.*
- A: It is not true that we are simply victims of the powers of evil who seek to rule the world—
- All:** *This is true: To me is given authority in heaven and on earth, and lo I am with you, even until the end of the world.*
- A: It is not true that we have to wait for those who are specially gifted, who are the prophets of the Church before we can be peacemakers—
- All:** *This is true: I will pour out my spirit on all flesh and your sons and daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions and your old men shall have dreams.*

A: It is not true that our hopes for liberation of humankind, of justice, of human dignity of peace are not meant for this earth and for this history—

**All:** *This is true: The hour comes, and it is now, that the true worshipers shall worship God in spirit and in truth.*

A: So let us journey through Advent in hope, even hope against hope.

**All:** **Let us see visions of love and peace and justice. Let us affirm with humility, with joy, with faith, with courage: Jesus Christ—the life of the world. Amen.**

~ written by Allan Boesak, in *Walking on Thorns* (Eerdmans, 2004). Posted on Journey with Jesus. <http://www.journeywithjesus.net/poemsandprayers/>

## **Prayers of Intercession**

A: Trusting in your eternal love, we pray for all the world.

*A brief silence.*

A: Mary offered her womb for the fulfillment of your promise. Take what we have and use it accordingly, proclaiming your message of salvation through the life of your Church. Merciful God,

**All:** **Hear our prayer.**

A: We pray for the earth and all who call it home. Help us to care faithfully for its resources and ecosystems. Merciful God,

**All:** **Hear our prayer.**

A: We pray for leaders, both local and global. Inspire them to prioritize the wellbeing of all people and the planet. Guide them to work together for peace and justice. Merciful God,

**All:** **Hear our prayer.**

A: We pray for healing for all who are suffering (*especially...*) Comfort those who are in pain, and bring healing to our relationships, communities, and world. Merciful God,

**All:** **Hear our prayer.**

A: We pray for all oppressed peoples around the world. Help all people to recognize and honor the dignity and wellbeing of others, and lift up those on the margins. Merciful God,

**All:** **Hear our prayer.**

*Here other intercessions may be offered.*

A: We pray for insights from the lives of those who have gone before us. May we learn from them how to lead faithful lives. Merciful God,

**All:** **Hear our prayer.**

P: We entrust all our prayers, spoken and unspoken to you. In Jesus' name we pray.  
**All: Amen.**

### **Sharing of Peace**

P: The Lord of peace give you peace at all times and in all ways.  
**All: And also to you.**

*Please turn to the people near you to offer a gesture of peace and the greeting, "God's peace be with you!" You are also encouraged to turn to the back of the sanctuary and greet the worshippers on Zoom with a wave or gesture of peace.*

*(Please be seated)*

### **Offering**

*This month our Local Hunger Offering will be given to **Yates County Food Program/ProAction.***

**Offertory Music** "Bring Us Hope" *Ruth Elaine Schram*

*(Please rise in body or spirit)*

**Offertory Hymn** (verse 3 of Unexpected and Mysterious, sung to tune of Hymn of Joy)

*We are called to ponder myst'ry 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.*

### **Offertory Prayer**

A: Gracious God, you bestow on us abundant gifts of time, talent, and treasure.  
**All: With humble hearts we return to you a portion of these gifts. Receive them as a sign of our commitment to bring good news to the poor, bind up the brokenhearted, and proclaim your love for all people. Amen.**

## **We Share God's Meal**

### **The Great Thanksgiving**

P: The Lord be with you.  
**All: And also with you.**  
P: Lift up your hearts.

**All: We lift them to the Lord.**

P: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**All: It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

P: It is a good and joyful thing to give our thanks to you, Lord God of hosts, O ancient of days, for from of old have called forth life... ..And so with your people on earth and all the company of heaven we sing your praise and join the unending hymn.

Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow-er 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, ho - san - na in the high - est.

P: God of Mary, whose womb bore the sacred fruit of our salvation, bring forth from this fruit of the vine your cup of blessing... ..Great is the mystery of faith.

**All: Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again.**

P: God of holy expectation, let your face shine upon us and your dawn break upon us that we may be saved. Make your church expectant in faith as we labor for what we cannot yet see. Come and dwell with your people who yearn to be restored, to be forgiven, to belong. Let the warmth of your face shine upon those who seek the peace long promised for Bethlehem, for Jerusalem, and for your waiting world. Bring us, with the saints who have looked for your coming, to the day when we and all your children shall celebrate and leap for joy in your holy presence, one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

**All: Amen.**

## The Lord's Prayer

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

All: **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.**

## Eucharistic Invitation

P: God who loves and nurtures us as children now nourishes us on the body and blood of Jesus Christ, whose death and resurrection carries the promise of forgiveness of sin and eternal life. Come to the table, for all is prepared.

All: **Amen.**

*(Please be seated)*

## Lamb of God



1 O Lamb of God, you bear the sin of all the world a - way;  
2 O Lamb of God, you bear the sin of all the world a - way;  
3 O Lamb of God, you bear the sin of all the world a - way;



you suf-fered death our lives to save: have mer-cy now, we pray.  
you set us free from guilt and grave: have mer-cy now, we pray.  
e - ter-nal peace with God you made: give us your peace, we pray.

## Hymns During Communion:

*The Angel Gabriel Came Down to Earth*

*Light One Candle*

*Awake! Awake, and Greet the New Morn*

*Solo/John Dubbs*

*#240*

*#242*

## Table Blessing

P: The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in his grace.

**All: Amen**

## Prayer After Communion:

A: Generous God,

**All: we thank you for the gift of life, for the bread of salvation. We thank you for coming among us, for leading us into peace. We thank you for showering us with mercy, for sending us into the world. Come, Lord Jesus, and go with us as we feed the hungry in your name. Amen**

## We Leave to Serve

## Announcements

## Blessing

P: God of endings and beginnings, God in the darkness and the light, God, our hope for the journey, bless and keep you now and forever.

**All: Amen.**

## Litany

R: My soul magnifies the Lord.

**All: My spirit rejoices in God my Savior.**

R: God is merciful to all who fear and trust God,

**All: From generation to generation.**

R: God has shown strength, scattering the proud.

**All: Their pride is shattered in God's presence.**

R: God has brought down the powerful from their thrones,

**All: Lifted up the lowly,**

R: Filled the hungry with good things,

**All: And sent the rich away empty.**

R: According to the promise that was made to our ancestors,

**All: To Abraham and his descendants forever.**

R: Praise God!

**All: Alleluia!**

*(Please stand to sing the hymn and turn to face the flame as it exits the church)*

**Sending Hymn:**

*My Soul Proclaims Your Greatness*

#251

1 My soul pro-claims your great-ness, Lord; I sing my Sav - ior's praise!  
 2 To all who live in ho - ly fear your mer - cy ev - er flows.  
 3 To Is - ra - el, your ser - vant blest, your help is ev - er sure;

You looked up - on my low - li - ness, and I am full of grace.  
 With might - y arm you dash the proud, their schem - ing hearts ex - pose.  
 the prom - ise to our par - ents made their chil - dren will se - cure.

Now ev - 'ry land and ev - 'ry age this bless - ing shall pro - claim—  
 The ruth - less you have cast a - side, the low - ly throned in - stead;  
 Sing glo - ry to the Ho - ly One, give hon - or to the Word,

great won - ders you have done for me, and ho - ly is your name.  
 the hun - gry filled with all good things, the rich sent off un - fed.  
 and praise the Pow'r of the Most High, one God, by all a - dored.

Text: *With One Voice*, 1995, based on the Magnificat  
Music: KINGSFOLD, English folk tune; arr. Ralph Vaughan Williams, 1872–1958  
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## Sending

P: Go in peace. Prepare the way for Emanuel!

All: **Thanks be to God!**

## Postlude

*“The Desert Shall Rejoice”*

*Lani Smith*

### Hymn Notes “No Wind at the Window” ACS 906

John Bell (1949-) from Kilmarnock in Ayrshire, Scotland intended to be a music teacher but was called to ministry. He served as a youth pastor for the Church of Scotland and became aware of a lack of hymns representing the poor, that there was little helping us to see the plight of our brothers and sisters suffering poverty and persecution. He works around the world as lecturer in the renewal of congregational worship.

“No wind at the window” gives us an image of Mary’s life as a person living in the quiet isolation of the impoverished. But the angel is kind and explains to Mary that she is requested to be the mother of God’s son. This son will be “both victor and victim, both yours and divine.” The fourth stanza is in the voice of the narrator tells us that although no benefit was promised to Mary, she said “yes.”

COLUMCILLE is an Irish melody arranged by John Bell. Its four, four measure phrases are A B C D. The melody in A ascends haltingly and B descends more directly. The melody in C ascends more confidently with a suddenly rich harmonic language and D continues its ascent before dropping back down dramatically. The rising tenor line in the final phrase offers a major chord ending for the final stanza, thus accomplishing God’s intent for this incarnation moment in the Annunciation. Although the tune is in the minor it does not reflect sadness or darkness. It is a tune of great strength. In Bell’s arrangement the melody is anchored by parallel motion in the two lower parts. (bass and tenor) The rhythm in  $\frac{3}{4}$  time has a surging quality, which, when combined with the harmony creates a strong feeling of the inevitable realization of God’s will and plan for the coming of the Savior of humanity.