

*We acknowledge that the land on which we gather is the traditional territory of the Huron-Wendat, Haudenosaunee, and Anishinabek Nations, and the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation.*

*This territory was the subject of the Dish With One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement between the Iroquois Confederacy and the Ojibwe and allied nations to peaceably share and care for the resources around the Great Lakes.*

*This territory is also covered by the Toronto Purchase, Treaty 13 of 1805, and the Williams Treaties of 1923. Today, our community is home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island. We gather by these territorial lands and waters to worship, listen, learn, share, and heal together in the name of our Creator, the Holy One of Blessing*

## **St. Paul's Lutheran Church**

**Advent Three**

***December 17, 2023***

PRELUDE

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH

In Advent, the Church is called to join again with the people of Israel, our ancestors in faith in waiting for Messiah.

We gather around the wreath, lighting a new candle each week as a sign of the growing light of God's promise among us and Messiah's come near.

The spirit of the Lord God is upon me

**because the Lord has anointed me;**

**he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed,**

to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives,

**and release to the prisoners; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour,**

On this third Sunday of Advent,

we light the first, second and third candles of the wreath.

The candles of HOPE, PEACE, and JOY

*The first, second, and third candles are lit.*

**HYMN ELW 257 O COME, O COME EMMANUEL VERSE 5**

**O come, O Key of David, come**

**and open wide our heavenly home.**

**Make safe the way that leads on high,**

**and close the way to misery.**

***Refrain:* Rejoice! Rejoice! Immanuel**

**shall come to you, O Israel.**

We await your promise O God,  
Of the One coming to bring light in our darkness  
Who was anointed by the Spirit  
To bring about the year of the Lord's favour  
Stir us up to receive Messiah among us  
And prepare us to be your Advent people.

**Amen.**

### **ELW 244 REJOICE, REJOICE, BELIEVERS**

**Rejoice, rejoice, believers, and let your lights appear;  
the evening is advancing, and darker night is near.  
The Bridegroom is arising and soon is drawing nigh.  
Up, pray and watch and wrestle; at midnight comes the cry.**

**The watchers on the mountain proclaim the Bridegroom near;  
go forth, as he approaches, with alleluias clear.  
The marriage feast is waiting; the gates wide open stand,  
Arise, O heirs of glory; the Bridegroom is at hand.**

**You saints, who here in patience your cross and suff'rings bore,  
shall live and reign forever when sorrow is no more.  
Around the throne of glory the Lamb you shall behold,  
in triumph lay before him their diadems of gold.**

**Our hope and expectation, O Jesus, now appear;  
arise, O Sun so longed for, above this shadowed sphere.  
With hearts and hands uplifted we plead, O Lord, to see  
the day of earth's redemption that sets your people free.**

### **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.**

# KYRIE



In peace, let us pray to the Lord.



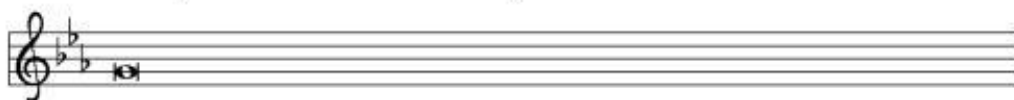
Lord, have mer - cy.



For the peace from above, and for our salvation, let us pray to the Lord.



Lord, have mer - cy.



For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the church of God,



and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord.



Lord, have mer - cy.



For this holy house, and for all who offer here their worship and praise,



let us pray to the Lord.



Lord, have mer - cy.



Help, save, comfort, and de - fend us, gra - cious Lord.



A - men, a - men.

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

Stir up the wills of your faithful people, Lord God, and open our ears to the words of your prophets, that, anointed by your Spirit, we may testify to your light; through Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

## WORD

### ISAIAH 61:1-4, 8-11

The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; to provide for those who mourn in Zion— to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit. They will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, to display his glory.

They shall build up the ancient ruins, they shall raise up the former devastations; they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations..... For I the Lord love justice, I hate robbery and wrongdoing; I will faithfully give them their recompense, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them. Their descendants shall be known among the nations, and their offspring among the peoples; all who see them shall acknowledge that they are a people whom the Lord has blessed.

I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my whole being shall exult in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. For as the earth brings forth its shoots, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations.

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

### 1 THESSALONIANS 5:16-24

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise the words of prophets, but test everything; hold fast to what is good; abstain from every form of evil.

May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this.

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

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

**PEOPLE:**

Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia,  
al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

**LEADER:**

Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.

**PEOPLE:**

Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia,  
al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

GOSPEL

The holy gospel according to John. **Glory to you, O Lord.**

JOHN 1:6-8, 19-28

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light.

This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, "I am not the Messiah." And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the prophet?" He answered, "No." Then they said to him, "Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" He said, "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,'" as the prophet Isaiah said. Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. They asked him, "Why then are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?" John answered them, "I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal." This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.

The gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

SERMON

**HYMN ELW 246 HARK! A THRILLING VOICE IS SOUNDING**

**Hark! a thrilling voice is sounding.**

**"Christ is near," we hear it say;**

**"Cast away the works of darkness,  
All you children of the day."**

**Wakened by the solemn warning,  
from earth's bondage let us rise;  
Christ, our Sun, all sloth dispelling,  
shines upon the morning skies.**

**See the Lamb, so long expected,  
come with pardon down from heaven;  
let us all, with tears of sorrow,  
one and all, to be forgiven;**

**So, when next he comes with glory,  
and the world is wrapped in fear,  
he will shield us with his mercy  
and with words of love draw near.**

**Honour, glory, might, and blessing  
to the Father and the Son,  
with the everlasting Spirit,  
while unending ages run!**

### **NICENE CREED**

**We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
of all that is, seen and unseen.**

**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,  
the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father,  
God from God, light from light, true God from true God,  
begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father;  
through him all things were made.**

**For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven,  
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary  
and became truly human.**

**For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;  
he suffered death and was buried.**

**On the third day he rose again  
in accordance with the Scriptures;  
he ascended into heaven**

**and is seated at the right hand of the Father.**

**He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,  
and his kingdom will have no end.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,  
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,  
who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified,  
who has spoken through the prophets.**

**We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.**

**We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.**

**We look for the resurrection of the dead,  
and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

## SINGING INTO PRAYER

### ELW 263 SAVIOUR OF THE NATIONS COME VERSE 1

Saviour of the nations, come;  
virgin's Son, make here your home.  
Marvel now, O heav'n and earth,  
God has chosen such a birth.

## PRAYERS

With hope and expectation, we offer our prayers for the church, the world, and all who await God's day of restoration.

### *A Brief Silence*

Send forth your faithful people with words of promise and forgiveness. Teach your church to be bold in revealing your good news in word and in deed.

Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Creating God, protect earth's wilderness, especially where the lands are isolated and unexplored. Watch over all living creatures. Reveal your majesty in mountain peaks, flowing rivers, and blossoming wilderness roads.

Heal the earth where it longs for renewal. Rekindle our commitment to care for the earth.

Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Prince of Peace, send us your spirit of unity, so that justice may spring up among the nations. We hold in our hearts Ukraine, Russia, Israel, Palestine, Iran, India, and Sudan. Give us the will to repair broken systems and to increase cooperation for reconciliation and justice for the sake of all.

Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Merciful God, comfort your children with tender words of love and healing.

Surround all who are grieving, especially Ingrid and the Takahashi family.

Bind up the broken hearted and heal our wounds. Be a steadfast presence for all who know depression or anxiety, feel lonely or forgotten.

Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Lord of justice, strengthen and increase the ministry of food banks, meal delivery services, employment training and housing advocacy. Help us to seek ways to welcome the newcomer and work for a sustainable and loving community.

Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**



Grant your holy presence in these days of our journey to Christmas.  
Protect all who travel, that their way may be safe. Bless families as they  
gather in celebration and give to all peace and love.

Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Grant patience to all who are waiting this season. Bring reassurance to  
people awaiting new diagnoses or treatments. Protect expectant parents.  
Watch with those who keep bedside vigil. Stay close to those who await  
healing or relief especially Ingrid, Tom, and all we name in our hearts.....

*Pause*

Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Eternal God, clothe us in the garments of salvation, so that together we may  
rejoice in your presence with all the saints. Inspire us to live with faith as we  
await your new heaven and new earth.

Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Listen to these and all our prayers, O God of hosts, and restore us with your  
great and everlasting mercy.

**Amen.**

## **SINGING INTO PEACE**

**ELW 263 SAVIOUR OF THE NATIONS COME VERSE 6**

**Praise we sing to Christ the Lord**

**Virgin's son, incarnate word!**

**To the holy Trinity**

**Praise we sing eternally!**

## **PEACE AND OFFERING**

The peace of Christ be with you all.

**And also with you.**

The offering will now be received and may God bless the gifts of your life.

## **MEAL**

### **OFFERING PRAYER**

Saviour of the nations, come. Make your home here in us. Feed us with  
your love, that our faith shine ever new and our lives reveal your light.

**Amen.**

## **THE 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.**

## EUCHARISTIC PRAYER

For the power of love in human life and history,  
we give thanks and praise.

Long ago our ancestors knew love's power  
and they became the tellers of love's tale.

Love bound them in covenant,  
teaching them to live in community  
with compassion and concern for the poorest among them.

Yet centuries of domination and violence  
shaped a different kind of community based on selfishness and inequality.

In the struggle against oppression,  
Jesus became the face of love,  
showing us the way to abundant life.

In word and deed, he announced love's new reign  
of justice, reconciliation, and peace.

Filled with the courage and passion of love's spirit,  
he gave his life to challenge the unjust systems of this world.

On the last night of his earthly life,  
as he shared a meal with his friends,  
Jesus took bread, gave thanks, broke it,

and gave it to his followers, saying:

"Share this bread among you; this is my body which will be broken for justice.  
Do this to remember me."

When supper was over, he took the cup, gave thanks,  
and gave it to his disciples, saying:

"Share this wine among you; this is my blood which will be shed for liberation.  
Do this to remember me."

God of love, spirit of compassion,  
bless us and this bread and wine.  
May this meal be food and drink for our journey—  
renewing, sustaining, and making us whole.  
When we eat this bread and drink from this cup  
we experience again the presence of Jesus in our midst.  
**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.  
Forgive us our trespasses  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory,  
forever and ever. Amen.**

### **INVITATION TO COMMUNION**

Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you. Share in the feast of salvation.  
**Thanks be to God.**

### **HOLY COMMUNION AND BLESSING**

*Please come forward to the communion rail, receive the communion wafer in your hand from the pastor  
and the wine in an individual glass from the assisting minister.  
Place your communion cup in the basket provided.*

### **PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

God for whom we wait, you come to us in the broken bread and the cup we  
share. Make us ready always to welcome Christ into our hearts, and send us  
forth to be your people in the world, announcing your coming among us  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

## **SENDING**

### **BENEDICTION**

May Christ, the sun of righteousness shine upon you  
and scatter the darkness from before your path.  
Almighty God, Father, + Son, and Holy Spirit,  
bless you now and forever.  
**Amen.**

**HYMN ELW 264 PREPARE THE ROYAL HIGHWAY**

**Prepare the royal highway; The King of kings is near!**

**Let ev'ry hill and valley A level road appear!**

**Then greet the King of Glory Foretold in sacred story:**

***Refrain:* Hosanna to the Lord, For He fulfills God's Word!**

**God's people, see Him coming: Your own eternal king!**

**Palm branches strew before Him! Spread garments! Shout and sing!**

**God's promise will not fail you! No more shall doubt assail you! *Refrain***

**Then fling the gates wide open To greet your promised king!**

**Your king, yet ev'ry nation Its tribute too may bring.**

**All lands, will bow before Him! Their voices join your singing: *Refrain***

**His is no earthly kingdom; It comes from heav'n above.**

**His rule is peace and freedom And justice, truth, and love.**

**So let your praise be sounding For kindness so abounding:**

***Refrain:* Hosanna to the Lord, For He fulfills God's Word!**

**DISMISSAL**

**Go in peace. Prepare the way of the Lord. Thanks be to God.**

**POSTLUDE**