



4th Sunday of Advent

December 22, 2024

Cradle and cross are inextricably connected on the fourth Sunday of Advent. Between a lovely tribute to the little town of Bethlehem and Mary's magnificent song of praise, the letter to the Hebrews reminds us in no uncertain terms that Christ's advent is for "the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." It is the kind of tension in which the church always lives as when in holy communion—with high delight—"we proclaim the Lord's death."



GATHERING

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

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRELUDE *Adagio from Organ Sonata no. 1 by Felix Mendelssohn(8:30);
O Come, O Come, Emmanuel by Cynthia Dobrinski (handbell choir, 11:00)*

Please quietly reflect and prepare for worship during the music.

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

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

In the name of the Father, and of the ☩ Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

God of all mercy and consolation, come to the help of your people, turning us from our sin to live for you alone. Give us the power of your Holy Spirit that we may confess our sin, receive your forgiveness, and grow into the fullness of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

Silence is kept for reflection.

Most merciful God,

we confess that we are captive to sin and cannot free ourselves. We have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways, to the glory of your holy name.

Amen.

In the mercy of almighty God, Jesus Christ was given to die for us, and for his sake God forgives us all our sins. As a called and ordained minister of the church of Christ, and by his authority, I therefore declare to you the entire forgiveness of all your sins, in the name of the Father, and of the ☩ Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

The prelude's purpose is to prepare your heart, your hands, and your mind for worship. The Lord is worthy of our preparation and the prelude provides us a time to do just that.

Washed in water and marked with the cross, the baptized children of God are united with Christ, and through him, with other believers, we confess our sins and return to our baptism. In forgiveness God raises us up again.

The paraments, which are the hangings on the altar, pulpit, and lectern, are blue for Advent. For Hope and Waiting.

GATHERING HYMN

#254 Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus

*The Hymns proclaim
the Gospel in song. We
sing a variety of hymns to
help us tell God's story.*



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

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.

*The Apostolic Greeting
is given by the Pastor
using the words of the
Apostle Paul in 2 Cor
13:13. In this greeting
the assembly is rooted in
the Triune life of God.*

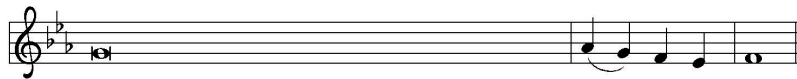
KYRIE



In peace, let us pray to the Lord.



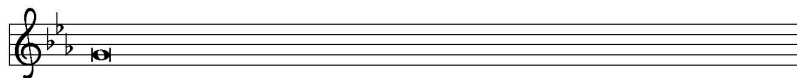
Lord, have mer - cy.



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



Lord, have mer - cy.



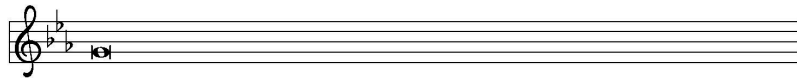
For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the church of God,



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 defend us, gra - cious Lord.



A - men, a - men.

CANTICLE OF PRAISE

Refrain



This is the feast of vic - to - ry for our God.



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



1 Wor - thy is Christ, the Lamb who was slain, whose
2 Sing . . with all the peo - ple of God, and



blood set us free to be peo - ple of God.
join in the hymn of all cre - a - tion:



Pow - er and rich - es, wis - dom and strength, and
Bless - ing and hon - or, glo - ry and might be to



hon - or and bless - ing and glo - ry are his.
God and the Lamb for - ev - er. A - men.

Refrain



3 For the Lamb who was slain has be -



gun his reign. Al - le - lu - ia.

Refrain

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Let us pray.

Stir up your power, Lord Christ, and come. With your abundant grace and might, free us from the sin that binds us, that we may receive you in joy and serve you always, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

The assembly is seated.



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

FIRST READING 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.

Word of God, word of life. **Thanks be to God.**

The prayer of the day is typically a prayer focused around the scripture texts for the day.

The Word part of our liturgy, is where we hear “the living voice of the Gospel.” We experience this in the Biblical readings, a sermon based around these readings, and the hymn of the day.

PSALM Luke 1:46b-55



The LORD has lift-ed up, has lift-ed up the low-ly.

My soul proclaims the greatness | of the Lord,

my spirit rejoices in | God my Savior,

for you, Lord, have looked with favor on your | lowly servant.

From this day all generations will | call me blessed:

you, the Almighty, have done great | things for me

and holy | is your name.

You have mercy on | those who fear you,

from generation to | generation. R

You have shown strength | with your arm

and scattered the proud in | their conceit,

casting down the mighty | from their thrones

and lifting | up the lowly.

You have filled the hungry | with good things

and sent the rich | away empty.

You have come to the aid of your | servant Israel,

to remember the prom- | ise of mercy,

the promise made | to our forebears, to Abraham and his chil- | dren forever. R

SECOND READING 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.

Word of God, word of life. **Thanks be to God.**

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

The assembly stands to welcome the gospel.



Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia,
al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.
Repeat alleluia
Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of e - ter - nal life.

GOSPEL Gospel: Luke 1:39-45

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."

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

The assembly is seated.

CHILDREN SERMON

SERMON

HYMN OF THE DAY

#723 Canticle of the Turning



1 My soul cries out with a joy - ful shout that the
2 Though I am small, my . . . God, my all, you . . .
3 From the halls of pow'r to the for - tress tow'r, not a
4 Though the na - tions rage from . . age to age, we re -



God of my heart is great, and my spir - it sings of the
work great . . things in me, and your mer - cy will last from the
stone will be left on stone. Let the king be - ware for your
mem - ber who holds us fast: God's mer - cy must de -



won - drous things that you bring to the ones who wait.
depths of the past to the end of the age to be.
jus - tice tears ev - 'ry ty - rant . . . from his throne.
liv - er us from the con - quer - or's crush - ing grasp.



You fixed your sight on your ser - vant's plight, and my
Your ver - y name puts the proud to shame, and to
The hun - gry poor shall . . weep no more, for the
This sav - ing word that our fore - bears heard is the



weak - ness you did not spurn, so from east to west shall my
those who would for you yearn, you will show your might, put the
food they can nev - er earn; there are ta - bles spread, ev - 'ry
prom - ise which holds us bound, till the spear and rod can be



name be blest. Could the world be a - bout to turn?
strong to flight, for the world is a - bout to turn.
mouth be fed, for the world is a - bout to turn.
crushed by God, who is turn - ing the world a - round.



Refrain

My heart shall sing of the day you bring. Let the fires of your jus - tice burn.



Wipe a - way all tears, for the dawn draws near, and the world is a - bout to turn.

THE APOSTLES' CREED

Living together in hope and trust, let us confess our faith together.

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

As we prepare for Emmanuel, God-with-us, let us pray for all people and places that long for God's presence.

A brief silence.

God our uniter, increase communication and cooperation in our relationships with those of other traditions and religions. Root your church in the radical message of your incarnation, and enable us to pursue your justice in the world. Lord, in your mercy,
receive our prayer.

God our creator, we praise you for the beauty that surrounds us. Awaken in us a renewed sense of care for the wildlife in our communities, especially in the Eno River state park, Duke Forest, Hollow Rock nature park, Sandy Creek park, and in our backyards and neighborhoods. Form us into faithful stewards of what you have made. Lord, in your mercy,
receive our prayer.

God our sovereign, Mary proclaims a new way of life that lifts up the lowly and fills the hungry with good things. Nurture in local governments and municipalities a desire to care for all who are overlooked and ignored. Lord, in your mercy,
receive our prayer.

As Lutheran Christians we have three creeds to articulate our faith. The Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian Creeds. Through the Apostles' Creed we confess our faith in the triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

The prayers of intercession are prepared in advance by writers from across the Church based around the scripture for a given week.

God our beacon, as the northern hemisphere begins its slow turn toward more daylight, remind us that even in the deepest nights, you are there. Comfort the frightened, anxious, lonely and bereaved, especially those impacted by the school shooting this week in Wisconsin. Hold closely those who are ill and recovering from illness, especially Greg, Jan, Janet, Joyce, Phyllis, Larry, Bob, Ellie, Mary, John, Pat, Anna, Pat, Susan, Wendy, and Charlie. Lord, in your mercy,
receive our prayer.

God our guide, shepherd the leadership of this congregation. Bless the council and staff in discerning future ministry and open their hearts to the voices of the community. Lord, in your mercy,
receive our prayer.

God our life, you remember the promises you have made to your people. In gratitude for those who have died, we praise you for your faithfulness throughout history. Lord, in your mercy,
receive our prayer.

Savior of the nations, come, and receive these prayers and the pleas of our hearts, in the name of Jesus Christ.
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 congregation is invited to share a sign of God's peace with one another
The assembly sits.*

The passing of the peace is traditionally part of the liturgy, so that anyone in the gathered assembly may have a time to be reconciled to one another before sharing the meal.



MEAL

God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ.

OFFERING

An offering is gathered for the mission of the church, including the care of those in need.

OFFERTORY *Ave Maria by Camille Saint-Saens; Soren Strom-Jensen, tenor*

The assembly stands.

OFFERTORY HYMN

Cre-ate in me a clean heart, O God, and re-new a right
spir-it with-in me. Cast me not a-way from your pres-ence, and take
not your Ho-ly Spir-it from me. Re-store to me the joy of
your sal-va-tion, and up-hold me with your free Spir-it.

A musical offering is given to God in our worship as the gifts of the assembly are collected. This is a reminder of God's abundance. We offer back to God just a small portion of what God has given us, so that the mission of God can be realized.

OFFERTORY PRAYER

Let us pray together.

Creator God,

you made the whole world,

even the farthest stars,

and you draw near to feed us.

We praise you for these gifts of bread and wine.

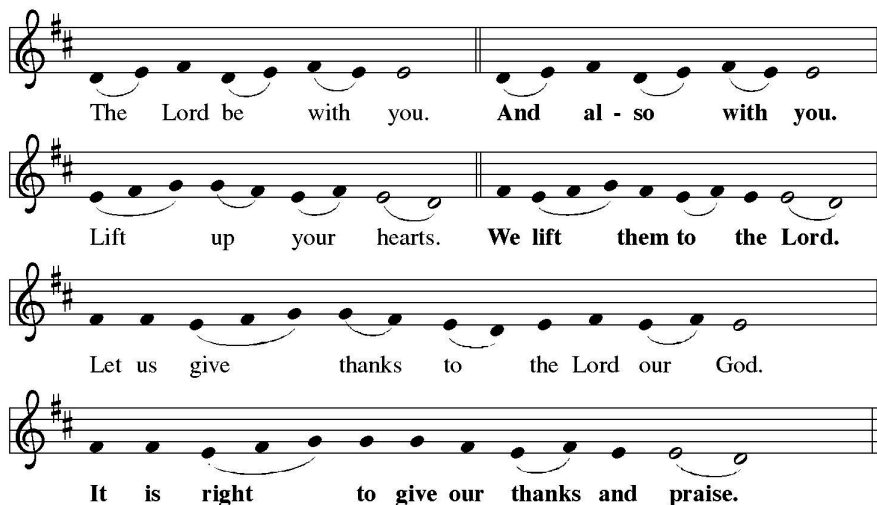
Strengthen us with this food

that we may live in expectation

for the advent of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

GREAT THANKSGIVING



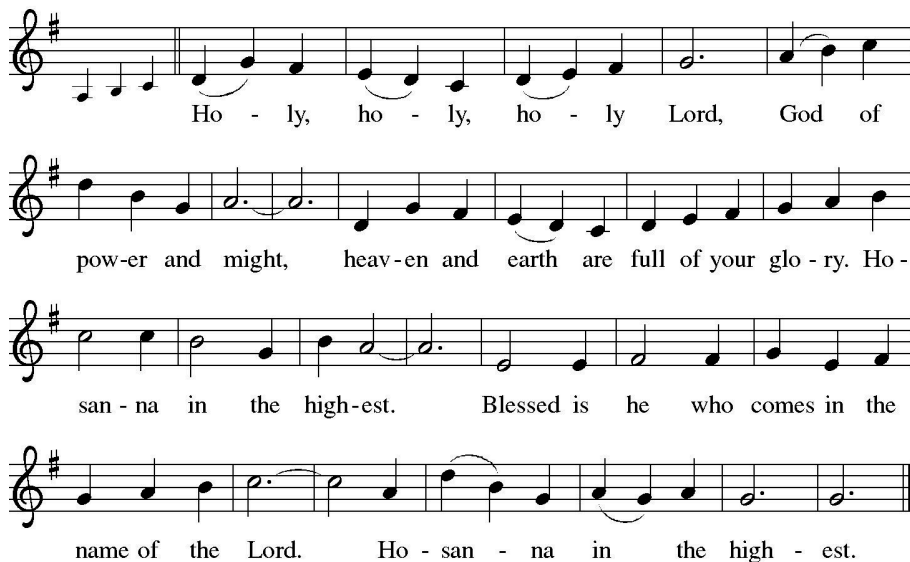
The Lord be with you. And al - so with you.
Lift up your hearts. We lift them to the Lord.
Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
It is right to give our thanks and praise.

In the meal part of our liturgy we prepare to come to Christ's table. In the Great Thanksgiving we focus on being thankful for all God has done and for all God has given to us. In the Eucharistic Prayer, we ask God to send the Holy Spirit to this meal and we ask that Christ will fulfill his promise to be in the bread and wine.

PREFACE

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; who on this day overcame death and the grave, and by his glorious resurrection opened to us the way of everlasting life. 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:

HOLY, HOLY, HOLY



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.

EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER

Holy, mighty, and merciful Lord, heaven and earth are full of your glory. In great love you sent to us Jesus, your Son, who reached out to heal the sick and suffering, who preached good news to the poor, and who, on the cross, opened his arms to all.

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 death, resurrection, and ascension, we await his coming in glory.

Pour out upon us the Spirit of your love, O Lord, and unite the wills of all who share this heavenly food, the body and blood of Jesus Christ, our Lord; to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be all honor and glory, now and forever. **Amen.**

THE 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

God feeds us with tender mercy.

Come to the table.

COMMUNION

This is the Lord's table. Jesus is the host. We are Christ's guests. Jesus welcomes everyone to come, to eat and be nourished, fed and forgiven. Visitors and children are welcome to receive communion. Those who do not receive communion are welcomed forward to receive a blessing. Gluten-free wafers and grape juice are available. The pastor and communion assistant will come to the pews of those unable to come forward.

When giving the bread and cup, the communion ministers say

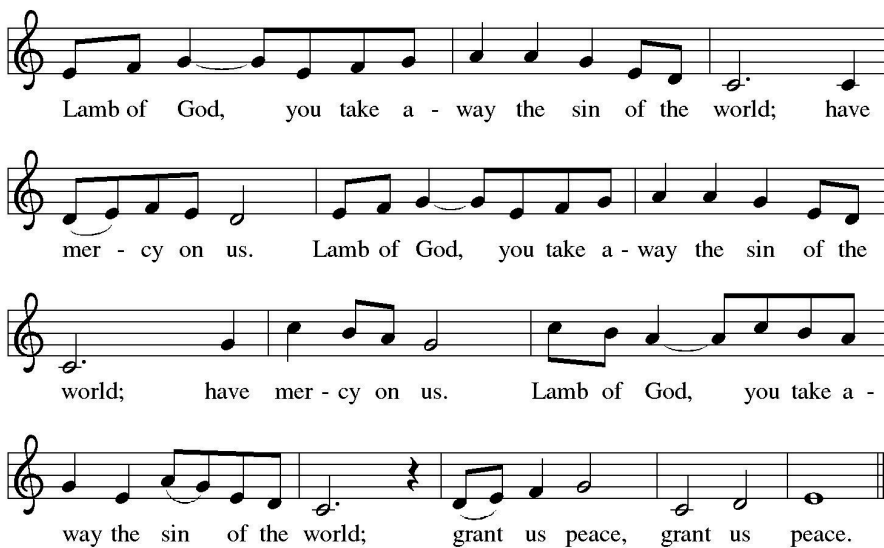
The body of Christ, given for you.

The blood of Christ, shed for you.

Each person may respond: Amen.

The assembly is seated.

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.

The Lamb of God is a title for Jesus that appears in John 1:29. It is here that we are reminded that our Lord is present and we are to behold his glory.

COMMUNION HYMN

#490 Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence



1 Let all mor - tal flesh keep si - lence, and with fear and trem - bling stand;
2 King of kings, yet born of Mar - y, as of old on earth he stood,
3 Rank on rank the host of heav - en spreads its van - guard on the way;
4 At his feet the six - winged ser - aph, cher - u - bim with sleep - less eye,



pon - der noth - ing earth - ly - mind - ed, for with bless - ing in his hand
Lord of lords in hu - man ves - ture, in the bod - y and the blood,
as the Light of light, de - scend - ing from the realms of end - less day,
veil their fac - es to the pres - ence, as with cease - less voice they cry:



Christ our God to earth de - scend - ing comes full hom - age to de - mand.
he will give to all the faith - ful his own self for heav'n - ly food.
comes, the pow'rs of hell to van - quish, as the dark - ness clears a - way.
"Al - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia, Lord Most High!"

Text: Liturgy of St. James; tr. Gerard Moultrie, 1829–1885, alt.
Music: PICARDY, French folk tune, 17th cent.

The assembly stands.

TABLE BLESSING

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



Now, Lord, you let your ser-vant go in peace: your word has been ful -



filled. My own eyes have seen the sal - va - tion which you have pre-pared in the



sight of ev - 'ry peo - ple: a light to re-veal you to the na - tions



and the glo - ry of your peo - ple Is - ra - el.



Now, Lord, you let your ser - vant go in peace.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Let us pray together.

Generous God, 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.



SENDING

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

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.

Our final part of our liturgy is the sending. We are sent out into the world reminded of God's mission and strengthened by the presence of Christ and one another through the power of the Holy Spirit.

SENDING HYMN

#264 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 VÅG FÖR HERRAN, Swedish folk tune, 17th cent.
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DISMISSAL

The assembly is sent into mission.

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

POSTLUDE *Improvisation by Ted Turner*

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“The Mission of St. Paul’s Lutheran Church as a part of the family of God is to share God in Christ with the World by equipping one another through worship, learning, witness, service and support.”

Congregation Council

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Joan Albright

Vice-President

Katie Benjamin

Secretary

Megan Cunningham

Co-Treasurers

Angela Maine, John Foreman

Co-Financial Secretaries

Rod Runestad, Phil Hart

Council Members

Joan Albright, Megan Cunningham, Mike Mauriello, Katie Benjamin, Jayce Getz, Emily Pauline, Ken Knudsen, Michelle Meadors, Steve Myzk

Welcome to St. Paul's

In celebrating God's beauty and strength created through diversity, we welcome, value, and include all of God's children regardless of race, culture, age, sexual orientation, gender expression, ability, appearance, or citizenship. St. Paul's is committed to racial equality.

Admission to the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is by invitation of our Lord, presented through the Church to those who are baptized. If you are unable to receive Holy Communion at the altar, please notify an usher to receive communion at your seat. All are welcome at the table for a blessing. We use red wine and bread at communion, and offer grape juice and gluten-free wafers. Inform your server at the rail if you desire either.

Distribution of the Communion Elements take place as follows:

Exit the pew to the side aisles. Empty cups are obtained from the trays located by the front exit. Proceed to the altar. Persons on the right side (lectern side) proceed to the back of the altar rail and fill forward towards the front. The left side (pulpit side) proceed to the front of the altar rail and fill towards the back. After communing, depart down the center aisle to your seat. Please place your cup in one of the baskets.

St. Paul's Live Stream Policy

1. St. Paul's Lutheran Church live streams the 11:00 AM service every Sunday. The service is posted to Vimeo and Facebook. In addition, special services may be live streamed.
2. The 8:30 AM service is not live streamed and is available for attendance by those who do not wish to be recorded. For live streamed services there will be a "No Video Zone" designated in the Narthex.
3. It is recommended that all livestream services include a disclaimer about the service being recorded, posted on a visible location at the entrance of the sanctuary and written in the bulletin.
4. Children must have a signed waiver from their parent or guardian before being recorded.
5. We will not share personal or identifying information while a service is being live streamed, this includes during announcement, prayer requests, or the sermon.

Staff of St. Paul's

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St. Paul's Lutheran Church

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A member congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, North Carolina Synod